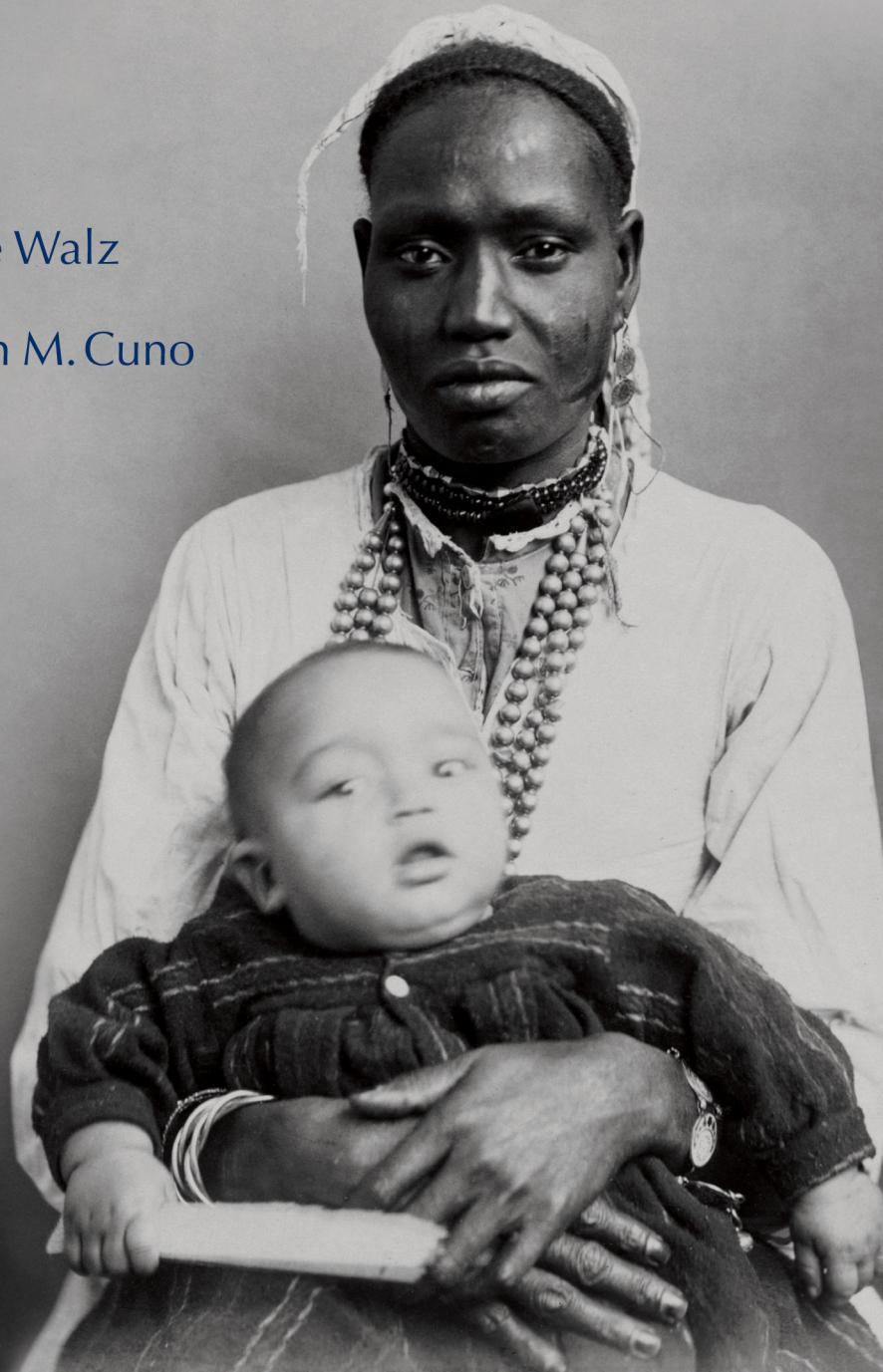


Race and Slavery in the Middle East

Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,
Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean

Edited by
Terence Walz
and
Kenneth M. Cuno



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To our mentors

In memory of Richard Greenfield of Oxford and Asmara, who first introduced me to the study of Africa and its history, and Daniel F. McCall of Boston University, who was instrumental in opening up the multiple paths to understanding its people.

Terence Walz

To Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot of UCLA, who introduced me to the study of Egyptian history, and in memory of Robert Cruden of Lewis and Clark College, who enabled me to imagine becoming a historian.

Kenneth M. Cuno

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Note on Transliteration and Personal and Place Names

Transliteration of Arabic words follows the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) style, but without the use of diacritics and with all but medial and ending ayns and hamzas eliminated. Transliteration of Turkish and Greek words follows modern conventions. Place names are rendered in their familiar English forms if such exist. Our authors have used more than one system in rendering personal names, reflecting the way they appear in the sources as well as the differences between Arabic and Turkish.

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Preface and Acknowledgments

This volume brings together the work of several scholars on the history of trans-Saharan African slaves and freedmen/women in the modern Middle East, in which the slaves and freedmen/women themselves are the subjects. A major purpose of the volume is to demonstrate that their history can be written, and that, at least occasionally, some of their voices can be recovered. Six of our contributors write on trans-Saharan Africans in Egypt, in slavery and emancipation, and three discuss the lives of African slaves in Sudan and the Ottoman eastern Mediterranean. This ratio may be said to reflect the present state of scholarship—excluding recent work on North Africa—on trans-Saharan slavery in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, a number of common themes that cut across present-day national boundaries emerged as the contributions came in, and this is reflected in the chapter arrangement.

The idea for this volume sprang from a panel organized by the editors for the November 2008 meeting of the Middle East Studies Association in Washington, D.C. We would like to thank Khaled Fahmy, who served as discussant on the panel, for his comments and encouragement. We are grateful to Neil Hewison of the American University in Cairo (AUC) Press for first suggesting the book project. He and Randi Danforth at the Press have guided it to publication. We also owe thanks to an anonymous reader for their helpful comments. We are especially grateful to Nadia Naqib, managing editor at the AUC Press, for her hard and exacting work, and her kind patience with us, in editing the manuscript into final shape.

Eve Troutt Powell's contribution, which appears as chapter 9, "Slaves or Siblings? Abdallah al-Nadim's Dialogues about the Family," was

originally published by Lynne Rienner in a collection edited by Israel Gershoni, Hakan Erdem, and Ursula Wokök titled *Histories of the Modern Middle East: New Directions*, and is reproduced here with the permission of the publishers, for which we are grateful.

We are grateful to the National Archives of Egypt (Dar al-Watha’iq al-Qawmiyya, or DWQ) for allowing us to reprint six documents from their collections. We acknowledge with thanks Ola Seif of the AUC for adapting the “Map of Cairo in 1848 showing the Administrative Districts” in chapter 2 from the map “Les quartiers du Caire (*shiyakhas*) en 1848” in Alleaume and Fargues, “Voisinage et frontier: resider au Caire en 1846,” as well as for her help in securing images in the AUC Rare Books and Special Collections Library.

Photographs and drawings of trans-Saharan African slaves, particularly of women who were the most often enslaved, are numerous but often were produced for ideological (that is, abolitionist) purposes or commercial (that is, prurient) potential. We have therefore used care in selecting images, while recognizing the difficulty of finding images entirely free of these biases. The drawing of the slave market, Cairo, is from Hay, *Illustrations of Cairo*. We are grateful to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Art Resource, New York, for permission to use the photograph of “Abou Nabut and Negro Slaves in Cairo” by Ernest Benecke (1852).

We are grateful to the Société de Géographie de Paris for permission to use two images, “Kadiga” (who also appears on the cover) and “Saïd Ghoueim” from their collection of photographs taken by Prince Roland Bonaparte at the Paris World’s Fair of 1889. We are happy to express our thanks to Charidimos Papadakis, author of *Οι Αφρικανοί στην Κρήτη Χαλικούτες* [*The Africans on Crete: Halikoutis*], for permission to use two images from his book. We also wish to thank Max Karkegi, owner of the website l’Egypte d’Antan, who has generously allowed us to reproduce the postcard “Femme turque avec son esclave.”

We are extremely grateful to Dr. Shawki Nakhla, former head of conservation in the Supreme Council of Antiquities, for permission to use a passport photograph of “Mariam Kilada Youssef,” representing a rare private photograph of a woman who started her life in Egypt as a slave, and was freed and made part of the family she served. Dr. Nakhla is the grandson of her former owner. Finally, we acknowledge with thanks Anti-Slavery International for the use of two images from their archives.

Introduction

The Study of Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean

Terence Walz and Kenneth M. Cuno

Until recently slavery was not a major area of focus for historians of the modern Middle East. One reason for that is the absence of anything resembling the traumatic American experience of slavery. More than a tenth of the United States' population is descended from enslaved Africans. Slavery divided the nation and a civil war was fought over it. Post-emancipation racial oppression, including de jure segregation, left a legacy of 'racial' issues in politics. The centrality of slavery in U.S. history and of race in American culture drives scholarly research in these subjects in the American field. Although slavery was an integral feature of Middle Eastern societies in the past, its history was different. Similarly, notions that may be described as 'racial' were constructed differently than in the Americas due to historical differences.

In the historiography of Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean, slavery and its memory hold a prominent place only in Sudan.¹ This is at least partly attributable to the fact that Sudan in the nineteenth century was "one of the most active slave dealing zones in Africa," as Ahmad Sikainga points out in his contribution in this volume. One half

to two-thirds of the population of Khartoum, the Sudanese capital, were enslaved in the second half of the century. A comparison with Egypt, where slaves (including white slaves) were never more than 1 percent of the population, and other Ottoman provinces where their proportion was even smaller, suggests at least one explanation for this difference in the modern historiographies. The relatively small proportions of the slave populations in Egypt and other Ottoman successor states also suggests why slavery does not loom as large in their collective memories as it does in the Americas.

A second reason for the relative neglect of slavery and slaves, and especially of trans-Saharan Africans, in the modern historiography of Egypt and the Ottoman Mediterranean, is identified by Michael Ferguson in his chapter in this volume. Minority and marginal populations have tended to be elided, like Chatterjeean ‘fragments,’ in the construction of post-Ottoman national historiographies. National historiography projects the nation backward in time, along with its presumed unity and uniformity. Thus Ferguson’s topic, the history of trans-Saharan Africans on Crete, has been virtually forgotten. Similarly, the prominent role of Africans in the army of Muhammad Ali—a history recovered by Emad Ahmed Helal in his contribution—was elided.

A third factor inhibiting the study of trans-Saharan slavery and slaves was the limited availability of historical materials until about forty years ago, when Egypt’s state archives were made more easily accessible to scholars and subsequently improved and expanded. Thus even the limited historiography on African slaves in nineteenth-century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean was uneven in coverage. The topics discussed most often were those that were accessible from European archives and writings: the organization and conditions of the slave trade, slavery as a legal and social institution, the European campaign to end slavery, and its eventual success toward the end of the century.

Since Gabriel Baer’s groundbreaking study of slavery in nineteenth-century Egypt, first published in 1967,² the study of race and slavery has been advanced by a new generation of scholars working in Egyptian, Ottoman, and Sudanese history, and using heretofore untapped or under-exploited sources to shift the focus of attention to the complexities of slavery itself and the experiences of those who were enslaved and emancipated. This international effort has been abetted by the advance of studies in the history of slavery in general, especially the trans-Atlantic slave

trade, which has generated interest in the lives of black Africans and their forced migration to almost all parts of the world. Studies of the trans-Saharan trade have also advanced. Ralph Austen has estimated that over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as many as 722,000 Africans were forcibly brought to Egypt by all routes, including the Red Sea, some of whom transited Egypt to other Ottoman provinces.³

Yet even among more recent studies, relatively few have examined the social lives of slaves and freedmen/women. Those scholars who have done so tend to focus on the slaves and former slaves of elite households, who were mostly 'white,' and usually of Circassian and Georgian origin.⁴ Despite their greater number and the growing scholarly interest in the African diaspora throughout the world, trans-Saharan Africans have received scant attention from historians of the modern Middle East.⁵

No single volume can fill that gap in the historical scholarship. Our aim is, instead, to make a contribution toward writing the history of trans-Saharan Africans into the modern social history of Egypt and the Middle East. The studies presented here are offered in the hope of encouraging others to continue research and writing in this area. Second, we hope to demonstrate that the sources now available are adequate for the reconstruction of this history, and to encourage colleagues to search for additional ones. Third, in looking beyond Egypt, we seek to highlight social and cultural commonalities in the African experience in Middle Eastern lands. Thus the chapters are arranged to highlight a number of themes that have emerged in the work of our contributors and that transcend present-day political boundaries.

Experiences of Slavery and Manumission

How accessible are the experiences of Africans in the Saharan crossing and servitude? The slave trade to Egypt and the Ottoman Mediterranean was ended more than a century ago, and narratives by former slaves comparable to those in North America have yet to be recovered. The recapturing of the voices of slaves, as opposed to those of their former masters, has been the preoccupation of a number of recent works, notably by Ehud Toledano⁶ and Eve Troutt Powell,⁷ who have used new sources and read between the lines of older sources in order to more fully depict the lives of slaves devoid of Western imagery and bias. This requires special skills because so much of what is known of slavery in the East has been framed by imperial discourse that presents the 'West' as

progressive and modern and the ‘East’ as decadent and immoral. The notion of Egyptian, Ottoman, and Sudanese slaves as living beings has been lost in the swirl of politically motivated denunciations of slavery on one hand and ‘oriental despotism’ and ‘oriental values’ on the other.

Although memoirs and personal narratives from members of the Ottoman imperial harem have been known for many decades, several have only recently been translated and republished, and now add considerably to a knowledge of how elite slaves lived in and reacted to the system into which they were unwillingly introduced.⁸ Though scholars working with Egyptian and Sudanese materials lack comparable narratives of private household life by trans-Saharan Africans, some accounts have been recorded, albeit mediated by Italian and French missionaries and European and American travelers.⁹

Several narratives of this type are analyzed in this volume in the contribution by George Michael La Rue. They include stories of the arduous desert trek to Egypt, similar to the notorious Middle Passage of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and treatment by slave dealers. Others report ‘conversations’ with ex-slaves, some of whom were marital partners of Europeans, which indicate a profound sense of self and situation. They depict fully engaged, lively individuals who were unafraid of casting off the bonds of servitude or of taking new chances with new marital partners or as soldiers in Muhammad Ali’s new army, the *nizam al-jadid*. From such accounts we can surmise that Africans in Egypt were not without hopes and dreams, or strategies to lead a life on their own terms. La Rue’s culling of the evidence recorded by Europeans sheds light on the enslaved Africans’ experience of capture and transportation, training, and sale—often multiple times—and many of their experiences seem likely to have mirrored those of the majority, even though slaves’ experiences in European households may not have been typical of those in Egyptian households.

The agency of trans-Saharan slaves is also reflected in Hakan Erdem’s chapter, which concerns a woman, Ferset, who was charged with arson following a misguided and botched effort to win her freedom. Building on themes developed in his pioneering study of Ottoman slavery, he examines the transcript of her interrogation by the police to open a window on the life of an African slave woman in an Ottoman Turkish household. The rich narrative that emerges also sheds light on the social life and beliefs of trans-Saharan Africans in Turkish towns. Whereas La Rue

recovered fragments of the voices of several slaves owned by Europeans in Egypt, Feraset's voice is heard at length from the police transcript studied by Erdem. His contribution points to a new and exciting area of exploration for scholars interested in slaves and other marginal groups in Ottoman history.

Some aspects of the experiences of trans-Saharan Africans in slavery and emancipation can be apprehended through the remarkably detailed census registers of pre-colonial Egypt that were used by Walz and Cuno in their contributions on Cairo and rural Egypt, respectively. Though not a substitute for narrative sources, quantitative sources such as these can answer such basic questions as how many slaves and freedmen/women there were, where they lived and in what sorts of domestic arrangements, and what kinds of jobs they held. Used in conjunction with narrative sources, quantitative sources can also elucidate certain phenomena. For example, La Rue found examples of European men who lived in long-term domestic arrangements with slave women. Walz demonstrates that it was not unusual for Egyptian and other non-European men to acquire such 'slave wives' in lieu of the more costly option of a contractual marriage to a free woman. Walz's research also bears on the phenomenon of trans-Saharan African social networking, a phenomenon discussed in different ways in the contributions by Erdem, Sikainga, and Kozma: he notes that the relative proximity of slave-owning households and of the residences of freed slaves in Cairo seems likely to have facilitated the kind of networking and the reproduction of African cultural life discussed by them.

A related theme is the experiences of trans-Saharan Africans after emancipation. This is at the center of Liat Kozma's contribution to this volume, which, like Erdem's, is based on police records. Kozma examines the story of a group of emancipated African women who were kidnapped, re-enslaved and trafficked. Their vulnerability was due to their sex, color, and apparent lack of a social network to which they could turn for protection and a livelihood. While the emancipated women and men of elite households seem often to have retained ties with their former masters and received gifts of property and even endowments, the majority were from non-elite households. Kozma shows that at least some of them suffered poor prospects. Her findings provide a counterpoint to the evidence of post-emancipation networking and mutual assistance projected by Walz in this volume in Cairo and by Erdem in an earlier work in Istanbul.¹⁰

The problems faced by freed slaves cut off from kin and lacking patrons in finding a livelihood is also raised in the contribution to this volume by Eve Troutt Powell, which analyzes two articles penned by the Egyptian journalist Abdullah al-Nadim. One of them features a dialogue between two ex-slaves, Sa‘id and his wife Bakhita. Sa‘id insists that the government should provide freedmen with a start by giving them land, a not outlandish suggestion in light of the fact that the khedives gave land to soldiers in lieu of pensions. Bakhita on the other hand prefers to maintain ties with her former masters as the surest way to cope with an uncertain future, reminding us of the kind of vulnerability faced by Kozma’s subjects. Al-Nadim’s fictional characters held up the two sides of emancipation: freedom meant independence but also brought insecurity. In the 1880s British colonial administrators, concerned over the fate of emancipated women—the majority of those freed—established a refuge and ‘domestic arts’ training center for them.¹¹ A decade later al-Nadim’s journalism is evidence that the difficulties of former slaves continued to be a public concern.

Status, Occupation, and Conjugality in Egypt

The census registers studied by Walz and Cuno offer an exceptional glimpse into thousands of Egyptian households at mid-century, and provide detailed information on trans-Saharan Africans. The urban elite and middle classes appear to have relied on the labor of black, mostly female slaves to supplement household staffs long before the nineteenth century, but with the expansion of the economy and the state under Muhammad Ali and his successors, the demand for domestic workers in the city grew apace. The Ottoman culture of the ruling elite provided openings at the top and in the higher government and military echelons for Turkish and other Ottoman immigrants and ‘white’ slaves, but with notable exceptions African slaves were rarely given opportunities at this level. Africans played an important role in the military, in the campaigns of the 1820s and 1830s, as described in Helal’s contribution, and later with the ill-fated French Army in Mexico (1863–67).¹²

Outside of the military, African slaves in the cities were usually put to work within households, typically small ones of six persons or less, or made assistants in retail and merchandising businesses (in which Abyssinians were favored). The 1848 census allows us to peer into ordinary households for a closer look. It shows that ‘middle-class’ households

(those headed by scribes, engineers, merchants, bureaucrats, or ulama) typically had one or two slaves and one or two resident Egyptian servants, usually from the countryside.¹³ The phenomenon of slaves and servants working side by side needs further exploration, especially in light of Baer's often cited argument that the development of a free labor market helped dismantle the institution of slavery.¹⁴

Most male slaves worked as assistants or servants, and when freed they often engaged in similar kinds of occupations as their former masters. Female slaves often were single workers in 'middle class' households, as caregivers for the elderly and the young, housekeepers, and cooks, and as conjugal partners of the heads of households. In the Cairo census registers, female slaves who performed conjugal duties were called *zawjat jariya*, literally 'slave wives.' As Walz notes in his contribution, slave wives were the only adult females identified in many households. Most were identified as emancipated (*ma'tuqa*), regardless of whether they had children. La Rue found that single European men in Egypt also acquired slave wives, especially before the hardening of European anti-slavery opinion in the later nineteenth century.

The frequency with which black ('Sudanese') and Abyssinian female slaves were incorporated into Egyptian and Turkish families as mothers, nannies, and servants stands out in any survey of Cairo households at this time. Among the upper class, there was a mimicking of ruling family household structure—where large numbers of slaves were employed.¹⁵ By the end of the century and a score of years after large-scale emancipation began, al-Nadim's second article, discussed in Powell's contribution, shows that domestic slavery had become associated with women's evasion of their duty of child rearing.

The pattern in rural Lower Egypt, examined by Cuno, was different. There were hardly any slaves in the four villages he studied in 1848, but in the 1868 census—following the cotton boom caused by the American civil war—African slaves accounted for between 3 and 6 percent of the villages' populations. Unlike in the cities, where most slaves were women employed as domestics, in the villages the majority of slaves were male, and most of them were acquired by large landholders. In the villages, presumably, most of the male slave majority performed agricultural labor, which was more arduous than urban employment. The village census registers do not use the term slave wife, though there are clear indications that some slave women were concubines.

Culture

Trans-Saharan Africans, though uprooted, were not deracinated. They networked in their new locales, preserving and recombining cultural elements from their homelands and influencing their host cultures. Perhaps spurred by John Hunwick's interest in the religious life of black Africans in the Muslim world,¹⁶ other historians are re-examining the *zar/bori* cult and finding it a response by Africans to their enslavement in Muslim lands. Ferguson's study of trans-Saharan African culture on Crete dovetails with earlier work in this area by Richard Natvig on Egypt,¹⁷ G.P. Makris and Janice Boddy on the Sudan,¹⁸ and Hakan Erdem and Ehud Toledano on Turkey.¹⁹ Collectively, these studies allow us to see similarities of experience on a larger scale than was previously imagined. Combined with work done on the *bori* cults in North Africa, particularly in Tunisia and Morocco,²⁰ we can now envision a substantial part of the Mediterranean world as impacted by trans-Saharan African culture.

Sikainga,²¹ working on the Sudan—where slavery was abolished much later than in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire—and Helal, working on Egypt,²² have uncovered contributions made by trans-Saharan Africans to popular culture. Sikainga's chapter in this volume continues that discussion. Slaves contributed in particular to the rich musical life of Egypt and Sudan. In Sudan that popular culture still lives and breathes, but in Crete it was uprooted and in Turkey it has disappeared. In Egypt, where it once was vibrant and often centered in beer taverns and in private homes, it is now fading but can still be heard in concerts and in specialized performance spaces in Cairo.²³

Race

The construction of race is a contingent process, and it would be naïve to expect that it was and is the same in the Middle East as in North America. Nevertheless all of our contributors address questions of 'race' to some extent. A near-consensus is apparent among the contributors on the popular association of Africans' color and origin—here, perceived 'blackness' and sub-Saharan origin—with servile status. This, obviously, was a consequence of the large proportion of slaves who were trans-Saharan Africans. Walz and Cuno found clear evidence in the census registers of an association of 'blackness' or *sudani* origin with slavery. Helal notes that although some Africans were promoted to high positions in Muhammad Ali's military-administrative apparatus, it was unusual enough to occasion

comment. Kozma shows that emancipated African women could be kidnapped in Egypt and trafficked to Palestine in part because of the popular association of blackness with slave status.

Another point that is evident in several contributions is the contingency of 'racial' perceptions, as reflected in terminology. In the contributions by Erdem and Ferguson it is evident that in north Mediterranean Ottoman Turkish culture, the descriptor 'Arab' signaled a 'black'; that is, a trans-Saharan African. Indeed, Erdem refers to "the common Ottoman usage in which black Africans were invariably and colloquially termed 'Arabs' and ethnic Arabs were 'white Arabs.'" Further research will be needed to understand how these perceptions and/or identities were constructed, and their meanings.

In Egypt the terminology was different but no more clear cut. The census registers, which reflect popular perceptions and linguistic usages, are not consistent in their representation of 'ethnic' origins. Walz found that the children of Africans and non-Africans were regarded as having the ethnic identity of their fathers—something that contrasts with the 'one drop rule' in American culture. Cuno found that there was some overlap in the range of colors ascribed to 'Sudanese' and Egyptians. Finally, both La Rue and Powell comment on how evolving European constructions of race influenced our sources as well as Egyptian culture.

The Nineteenth-Century Slave Trade and Numbers

The slave trade from sub-Saharan Africa to Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean is ancient. Egypt relied on slave recruits for its military from the early medieval period onward, as Helal notes in his contribution, and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the trade quickened on a number of accounts. In the Sudan, new kingdoms along the Nile at Sinnar and to the west in Darfur (and eventually Chad) arose, with elites anxious to obtain luxury goods and armaments and weaponry to maintain power; and in Egypt, the increasingly independent mamluk households augmented their private armies by purchasing black slaves. The tradition of strengthening the soldiery with black recruits was continued by Muhammad Ali (r. 1805–48) on an even larger scale. His invasion of the Sudan in 1820–21 had as its principal aim the forcible recruitment of men to serve in the new regiments he sought to train in the modern (*nizami*) manner. Helal shows that this effort was successful, contrary to the standard narrative in which the slaves were said to have

suffered high mortality, causing the Pasha to turn to conscription of the peasantry. Some twenty-four thousand troops, all or nearly all of them blacks commanded by (white) mamluk officers, were ready for action by the early 1820s, and they made up the majority of the forces sent to the Morea to suppress the Greek War of Independence.

During the Ottoman period the sale of slaves in Cairo, the country's chief market, was closely regulated for tax purposes. Slaves coming from sub-Saharan Africa were lodged and sold at the Wakalat al-Jallaba, the (Slave) Importers' Market on Sanadiqiya Street, near al-Azhar Mosque (white slaves were sold in a separate market). Renovation of the market began in the last years of the seventeenth century, which suggests growth in the trade in African slaves.²⁴ The word 'importers' (*jallaba*, sing. *jallab*) came to signify merchants and dealers in black slaves. In the nineteenth-century Sudan this term took on an ethnic meaning since the slave importers tended to be Danaqla and Ja'aliyyin people originating in the northern stretch of the Nile of that Sudanic region.²⁵

Muhammad Ali attempted to monopolize this trade, as he did most others, and eventually to forbid the private trade in slaves.²⁶ This effort failed, and indeed had a reverse effect—it is said to have caused the slave-laden caravans from Darfur to cease. Thus the monopoly on slave trading was withdrawn. Wakalat al-Jallaba continued to serve as Cairo's main slave market until 1843, when the Pasha decided to end sales there because he was fearful that the slaves were carriers of plague and other illnesses or else sitting targets when epidemics erupted. Africans reportedly died in disproportionate numbers in the horrendous plague of 1835–36, and those in the slave market were hit especially hard, as reported in La Rue's chapter. By then Wakalat al-Jallaba had become a site frequented by Western travelers, especially British and French abolitionists. Removal of the slave market also served the Pasha's aim of cultivating European opinion. The trade continued, albeit less visibly, in the cemeteries outside Cairo and out of private homes in the districts of Jamaliyya and Bab al-Sha'riyya.

The number of slaves in nineteenth-century Egypt can only be estimated. The registers of taxes collected on the sale of slaves at Wakalat al-Jallaba are not known to have survived, though they are mentioned by Louis Frank, who lived in Cairo during the French occupation.²⁷ Virtually the only 'hard' numbers date to the period 1790–92 when some 3,780 slaves were taxed upon arrival at Old Cairo and Bulaq,

where customs was paid.²⁸ Beyond that figure, we have the estimates and guesswork of dozens of foreign observers during the first half of the nineteenth century, who report figures ranging from five hundred to twelve thousand per annum.

The cholera and plague epidemics of 1831 and 1835 decimated the African population of Cairo and killed substantial numbers of the ordinary Cairene citizenry. As much as a third of the population, perhaps as many as seventy-five thousand people, died of plague.²⁹ Renewed slave raiding in the Blue Nile areas of old Sinnar and the 'opening up' of the southern Sudan by Egyptians in the early 1840s resulted in an upsurge in the slave trade that helped fill the gaps in the labor supply and to provide domestic help and wives for soldiers and the growing 'middle class'.³⁰ By the 1850s, it was thought that some five thousand slaves were brought to Cairo each year via the well-established routes.³¹ Our best estimate, based on the 1848 census (see chapter by Walz in this volume), is that there were about eleven thousand slaves in Cairo at mid-century, constituting not more than 5 percent of the city's population. It is believed that half of all slaves in Egypt lived in Cairo, so there were perhaps from twenty-two thousand to twenty-five thousand slaves in all of Egypt at this time.

But the real push in the trade occurred during the 1850s and 1860s, when the northern *jallaba*, including the powerful Ja'ali trader Zubayr Pasha, and Egyptian entrepreneurs based in Khartoum and Cairo, such as the al-Aqqad family, greatly extended operations in the southern Sudan.³² This coincided with the cotton boom of 1861–64, which both enabled and prompted many rural notables to acquire slaves for the first time. According to Austen, the number of trans-Saharan slaves arriving during the cotton boom years may have been ten thousand per annum.³³

Whereas the cotton boom is often cited as the cause of the upsurge in the slave trade to Egypt, the overall flow of trans-Saharan Africans into the Mediterranean lands grew by similar proportions.³⁴ For the trade into the Ottoman Mediterranean, the North African forwarding markets were principally Cairo, Alexandria, Benghazi, and Tripoli. According to the 1848 census, many slavers with Turkish, Anatolian and Syrian names operated in the same Jamaliyya and Bab al-Sha'riyya districts that the Sudan-based *jallaba* did. Toledano notes that the slave trade to the Ottoman Empire peaked in the last third of the century, and suggests that about eleven thousand African slaves per year arrived via Tripoli, the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, and Egypt,³⁵ meaning that some 363,000

trans-Saharan Africans came into the empire at that time. Some were sent via Cretan ports and stayed on the island, which, according to Ferguson, had a mid-nineteenth-century population of two thousand blacks.

Slavery was condoned and regulated in Islamic law, and a legalistic understanding of the rights of slaves and masters existed. Slaves could request to be resold if their masters abused them, for example, and slave women must quickly have learned the consequences of bearing children to their masters—they were to be freed, and their children would share in the inheritance on an equal footing with the children of contractual wives. Female slaves could not be prostituted. The Qur'an urges masters to treat their slaves kindly. It is certain that these rights were not universally applied, but it seems reasonable to believe that these precepts influenced the master-slave relationship.³⁶ As Erdem noted earlier, the Qur'anic recommendation of freeing slaves was widely respected.³⁷

European criticism of slavery in the Muslim East intensified after its abolition in the British and French empires in 1838 and 1848, respectively. Muslims reacted to the criticism as an attack on the family, defending Muslim slavery as comparatively benign, as Powell points out in her contribution. The Anglo-Egyptian Convention on the Abolition of Slavery formally abolished the trade in African slaves to Egypt in 1877, and a ban on the importation of white slaves went into effect seven years later.

Assuming that an average of three thousand to five thousand slaves were brought to Egypt each year during the whole of the nineteenth century, and that, as Walz finds, their average age was around sixteen years, and assuming a life expectancy of, say, thirty-five years, we should expect between sixty thousand and a hundred thousand slaves to have been living in Egypt at any given year—between thirty thousand to fifty thousand in Cairo alone. Is this figure realistic? Returning to firmer official statistics, we find that the number of slaves who were freed in the period 1877–97, after the banning of the slave trade and when the emancipation laws were in full effect, was around twenty-one thousand.³⁸ Why is this number so low?

The slave population continually diminished through mortality, manumission, and the birth of free children. Manumission was a religiously meritorious act, and various sources mention a customary period of service, usually less than ten years, after which a slave might be freed, even though it was not a requirement in Islamic law. Also, the children of slave women and their masters were free if acknowledged.³⁹ Such

children would be regarded as bearing the ethnicity of their fathers, and hence not ‘black’ or *sudani*.

The censuses of 1848 and 1868, examined by Walz and Cuno, also show that trans-Saharan Africans in general had low fertility because they married later and less frequently than the free population. Walz found that nearly a fourth of the ex-slaves living in Cairo’s Abdin district in 1848 were single. And only a fourth of female ex-slaves contractually married or informally cohabiting had children. The majority of trans-Saharan Africans, slave or free, were childless. Cuno found a comparable situation in his four villages in 1868: African slaves married less often and later in life than free Egyptians.

The limited fertility of trans-Saharan Africans had nothing to do with the climate, which some European travelers claimed adversely affected the ability of Africans to reproduce. It was a consequence of enslavement. Slaves could not marry without the permission of their masters. Marriage or informal cohabitation was an option for ex-slaves, but manumission at a relatively advanced age would rule out childbirth for most women. Only small numbers of Africans lived in distinctive communities by the early twentieth century. The clusters that some of them created in the nineteenth century among the shantytowns of Cairo and Alexandria and in ruined habitations of Egypt’s main cities moved out into newer and undeveloped districts rising outside the limits of the traditional city.⁴⁰ A larger number seem to have blended into the population, or, once the Sudan was accessible to them following the Anglo-Egyptian conquest of 1898, they returned to black Africa.

Notes

- 1 Symptomatic of the situation addressed by this volume is the absence of trans-Saharan Africans from a recent synthetic account of subalterns in modern Egyptian history. See Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Middle East*.
- 2 Baer, “Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 417–31, republished with some revisions as “Slavery and Its Abolition,” in his *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt*.
- 3 Austen, “Mediterranean Islamic Slave Trade out of Africa,” Table 1, 219.
- 4 Fay, “From Concubines to Capitalists,” 118–41; Hathaway, *Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt*. Hathaway has also written an innovative biography of the *kızlar ağası* of the Ottoman imperial court who spent several years in exile in Cairo, primarily from Ottoman archival documents: *Beshir Agba*.

- 5 Two recent works are a welcome exception to that pattern. See Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent* and Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*. For the Indian subcontinent, see the pioneering effort by Harris, *African Presence in Asia*, and his update “Expanding the Scope of African Diaspora Studies,” 157–68; and Robbins and McLeod, *African Elites in India*.
- 6 Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*; also “Representing the Slave’s Body,” 57–74.
- 7 Powell, *Different Shade*; “Silence of Slaves,” xxv–xxxvii; and “Will That Subaltern Ever Speak?,” 242–61.
- 8 Saz, *Imperial Harem of the Sultans*; Brookes, ed., *The Concubine, the Princess, and the Teacher*.
- 9 For one of the missionary (Italian) narratives, see Walz, “Lost Voices of the Trans-Saharan Migration”; and “Bakhita Kwashe” [2007], *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, available on the Internet at http://www.dacb.org/stories/sudan/bakhita_kwashe.html.
- 10 Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*.
- 11 Powell, *Different Shade*, 154.
- 12 Umar Tusun, *Butulat al-urta*; Hill and Hogg, *A Black Corps d’Elite*; Johnson, “The Structure of a Legacy,” 72–88, and his “Sudanese Military Slavery from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century,” 142–56; Prunier, “Military Slavery in the Sudan,” 129–39.
- 13 Alleaume and Fargues, “La naissance d’une statistique d’etat,” 182: “Table 12: Le Caire 1848: nombre d’esclaves et de domestiques par ménage selon la profession du chef.”
- 14 Baer, “Slavery and Its Abolition,” 186–87.
- 15 On the interaction between the rulers and the ruling elite, Cuno, “Ambiguous Modernization,” 247–69.
- 16 Hunwick, “Religious Practices,” 149–72.
- 17 Natvig, “Notes on the *Zar* Cult,” 178–88.
- 18 Makris, *Changing Masters*, and his “Slavery, Possession, and History,” 159–82; Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits*.
- 19 Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*.
- 20 Paques, *L’Arbre cosmique*; Paques, *La religion de l’esclavage*; Montana, “Enslavable Infidels,” 78–98; El Hamel, “Constructing a Diasporic Identity,” 241–60.
- 21 Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*, and his “Comrades in Arms or Captives in Bondage,” 197–214.
- 22 Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*.
- 23 Traditional *zar* music from Upper Egypt has been a regular feature of the Mazaher group of musicians performing at Makan Performance Space, Cairo, 2007–2010.
- 24 The recent work by Abd al-Mu’ti, *al-A’ila wa-l-tharwa*, identified a number of wealthy merchants of North African origin trading in western Sudan.

25 On the trade of the period, Walz, *Trade between Egypt and Bilad as-Sudan*.

26 This included interfering with the caravan trade along the Darb al-Arba'in, taking able-bodied male slaves into the army, and seizing control of the Wakalat al-Jallaba in 1819: Walz, *Trade between Egypt and Bilad as-Sudan*, 236–38.

27 Frank, “Memoire sur le commerce des negres au Kaire,” 76.

28 Walz, *Trade between Egypt and Bilad as-Sudan*, 33.

29 Kuhnke, *Lives at Risk*, 85.

30 Collins, “Nilotic Slave Trade,” 141–43.

31 Baer, “Slavery and Its Abolition,” 171–72.

32 On Zubayr, Holt and Daly, *History of the Sudan*, 67–69; Bjørkelo, *Prelude to the Mahdiyya*, 123–24, 129; Hill, *Biographical Dictionary of the Sudan*. On the al-Aqqads, Hill, *Biographical Dictionary of the Sudan*, under Hasan Musa al-Aqqad, Muhammad Ahmad al-Aqqad, Muhammad Abu Su‘ud Bey al-Aqqad, and Musa Bey al-Aqqad.

33 Austen, “Mediterranean Islamic Slave Trade,” Table 1, 219; Baer, using Western sources, principally British Foreign Office reports, estimates 25,000 to 30,000 per year: “Slavery and Its Abolition,” 171–72, 177.

34 Austen, “Mediterranean Islamic Slave Trade,” Table 2, 223–27.

35 Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*, 90.

36 For a discussion of slave rights, Marmon, “Concubinage, Islamic,” 527–29; Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, chapter 5.

37 Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 152–53.

38 Robinson-Dunn, *Harem*, Appendix 1, 210. Her numbers include forty male and 147 female Circassian slaves, with 1,500 unidentified ‘ethnic’ origins.

39 See Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 19, 52–54, 152–70.

40 Faboos, “Ambiguous Ethnicity,” 78, 83–84.

1

Muhammad Ali's First Army: The Experiment in Building an Entirely Slave Army

Emad Ahmed Helal

Military slaves were used by Egypt's rulers for ten centuries, from Ahmad Ibn Tulun (r. 868–84) to the late nineteenth century. The first slave armies were black, the result of Ibn Tulun having recruited forty thousand Sudanese slaves. In the Ikhshidid state (935–69) slaves formed an important sector too, especially in the age of Kafur al-Ikhshidi (905–68), a Sudanese slave who became the ruler. During the period of the Fatimid Caliphate (969–1171), black slaves continued to be used, especially during the reign of al-Mustansir (1029–94), whose Sudanese slave mother encouraged him to recruit them because of their reputation for bravery, toughness, and obedience. He recruited about fifty thousand Sudanese slaves in the army.¹ According to al-Maqrizi, they were the main reason for the decline and the fall of the Fatimid state, when they started a long conflict with the Turkish soldiers in the Fatimid army.² The Ayyubid era (1171–1250) witnessed a shift toward the recruitment of white slaves (mamluks), who grew so powerful in the army that they

succeeded in toppling the ruler and establishing their own state, the Mamluk Sultanate (1250–1517). Mamluks continued to be an important element in the military under Ottoman rule, and they had become the main power in Egypt by the arrival of the French in 1798.³ They spearheaded the resistance against them and later against the returning Ottoman authority. Muhammad Ali's massacre of the mamluks in the Citadel in 1811 did not signal the end of the system of military slavery in Egypt.⁴ Rather, it signaled the beginning of a different form of military slavery—the recruitment of an army built entirely of slaves but trained according to European standards, known in the army of Sultan Selim III as the *nizam-i jadid*.

Muhammad Ali used both white and black slaves in this effort. Its officers were mamluks, and its soldiers were black slaves. In this chapter we will look at the steps taken by Muhammad Ali to form that army. Though his methods changed several times, his consistent goal was to form a modern and well-trained military force that owed loyalty to him alone. He began around 1810 by building up his own mamluk retinue. By 1815, his idea had evolved into a 'mixed slave army' whose soldiers were white and black slaves. Then in 1820, it evolved again into a 'mixed but classificatory slave army,' in which Muhammad Ali specifically designated mamluks as officers and black slaves as soldiers. This was the last phase of Muhammad Ali's first *nizam* army. Historians have never studied that army, except to conclude that it quickly failed, and thus they begin with the second *nizam* army that Muhammad Ali started building in 1824. I call that stage the 'complex army,' whose officers were mamluks and free Turks, and soldiers were black slaves and free peasant conscripts. This last formulation characterized the structure of the Egyptian army until the end of the nineteenth century. During my review of these changes I will discuss some issues associated with the establishment of the army, including the role of the French officer Colonel Sève and the question of the failure of the experiment of recruiting black slaves.

Building Muhammad Ali's First Army

Muhammad Ali's Mamluk Household (1810–19)

Once Muhammad Ali lost all hope of obtaining the loyalty of the old mamluk households and the Albanian troops who came with him, he decided to get rid of both and to establish his own household of mamluks and beys that owed absolute allegiance to him. He started around

1810 to buy mamluks by every method, and allowed his family members, high-ranking officers, and government bureaucrats to purchase their own mamluks. At the same time, he succeeded in getting rid of the old mamluks in the so-called massacre of the Citadel in 1811. He also managed to disperse the Albanians by sending them to Arabia, Sudan, and the Egyptian provinces. In 1819 the number of his own mamluks was 500; Ibrahim Pasha owned about 300; Abbas Pasha, 150; Muhammad Bey al-Daftardar, 150; Muharram Bey, 100; and many other officers and bureaucrats owned several dozen.⁵ All of these high-ranking personages housed and fed their mamluks, and trained them in military tactics and maneuvers, just like the vanquished mamluk households. In the end, they were better trained than the old mamluks in equestrian arts and courage. The number of the new mamluk cavalry increased as a function of their proprietors' wealth.⁶

Muhammad Ali established a new and modern army during the period 1820–24, but he focused on infantry forces, not paying attention to the cavalry until 1829 because he depended on an irregular cavalry force of mamluks. By 1825 the irregular cavalry force owned by Muhammad Ali and his followers numbered 10,610 mamluks.⁷ Most of them were required to join the army in case of war, since they were considered the backbone of the cavalry force in the newly emerging Egyptian army. Despite individual competence and skill, their collective military capacity was still deemed insufficient because of differences in rank and employment, levels of training, and the weakness of the bonds between them.⁸ In 1829, he decided to establish a regular cavalry force. In 1831 he established a 'cavalry school' whose students were mamluks.⁹

From the beginning of his rule, Muhammad Ali paid close attention to the training of his private mamluks so that they could support him, when called upon, in the turbulent events in Egypt. He participated with them in the training and the equestrian racing that al-Jabarti called *rimaha*. He tells us about the *rimaha* the Pasha ordered up for his mamluks in a field in Giza on 4 June 1810, during which one of his mamluks was hit by a bullet and died. Al-Jabarti commented, "It is said that the shooter was meaning to hit the Pasha himself, but instead hit that mamluk."¹⁰ Al-Jabarti also tells us about a training schedule that was set up for the Pasha's mamluks. When one of his mamluks named Latif Pasha tried to lead Muhammad Ali's mamluks in a rebellion against him while he was in Hijaz in December 1813, by planning for a *rimaha* on 12 December,

which was not in the schedule, Muhammad Bey Lazughli, the *katkhuda* (deputy) of Muhammad Ali, got wind of it and ordered the leader of the mamluks not to go to the *rimaha* field and instead succeeded in murdering Latif Pasha.¹¹

Muhammad Ali was keen to keep his mamluks healthy. He even sent them to Asyut in April 1813 to keep them away from the plague that had spread to Cairo.¹² Later, after he had sent most of his mamluks to Colonel Sèvre for training in Aswan he continued to dispatch newly purchased mamluks to Asyut to avoid plague in Cairo. Al-Jabarti noted in 1822 that “the Pasha sent his mamluks and those whom he liked to Asyut because of the plague, like what happened last year.”¹³

In Cairo, Muhammad Ali’s mamluks lived in the Citadel, which was their training center and place of service, as is evident from the service file of one of them, Hamza Agha. It shows that he was registered as a member of the Pasha’s mamluks (*ghilman al-basha*) in 1816 and stayed in service with them in the Citadel until 1819, and that he was sent to the Military School in Aswan when Muhammad Ali established it in 1820. Later he became an officer in the army and occupied many military and administrative positions, eventually receiving the title pasha. His last position was as governor of Minufiyya province.¹⁴

In the Citadel, the Pasha established a civil school in 1815 to teach his mamluks reading and writing, mathematics, arithmetic, and astronomy. Al-Jabarti refers to that school in his biography of Hasan Efendi al-Darwish, who persuaded the Pasha to establish the school. After the Pasha agreed, Hasan Efendi was appointed its headmaster (*nazir*). After he died in May 1816, his assistant Ruh al-Din Efendi became the headmaster.¹⁵

In short, from the beginning Muhammad Ali was keen to purchase mamluks, and to educate them and prepare them for military service. Also, he permitted his family and those followers whose loyalty he trusted to own mamluks and train them as well, so that he could call them up to join his campaigns at any time. This was very similar to the way the defunct mamluk military system had worked.

The Mixed Slave Army

As a result of the overall scarcity of mamluks and the difficulty of obtaining them, and some time after the revolt of the Albanian soldiers in July 1815, Muhammad Ali decided to recruit black slaves in addition to mamluks into the army. He followed a gradual plan to form a ‘mixed slave

army.' He started by allowing his followers to buy and recruit black slaves for their own troops. Then he decided to form some black troops as an experiment, and finally he decided to form a complete slave army whose soldiers were black slaves and whose officers were white mamluks.

Burckhardt wrote about this plan in his book *Travels in Nubia*, after visiting Upper Egypt in 1816. Under the heading "Muhammad Ali and Sudanese soldiers," he wrote:

Slavery in the East has little dread . . . and slaves are treated well. It is only by the Turkish soldiers that slaves are ill-treated. They purchase, in Upper Egypt, slave boys, whom they rear in their service, and who, after they have come to a certain age, and learned the Turkish language, are clothed and armed as soldiers, and enlisted into the company or corps of which their master is the chief. He then draws the monthly pay of his slave from the governor, as he does that of every other soldier; for, according to the regulations of the Turkish army, the captain, or Binbashi, receives the pay for the number of men whom he has under his command, and distributes it among them. It thus becomes a source of emolument to him to enroll slaves, to whose services the government never objects, and whose pay goes into his own pocket, as he is subject only to the obligation of feeding and clothing them. Great numbers of Black soldiers have, in this manner, been introduced into the Turkish army in Egypt; it was even thought that Mohammed Aly Pasha had formed the plan of organizing a body of Black troops, and of drilling them according to the European manner; but the great dislike to this innovation expressed by his principal officers, appears to have made him abandon it. At present, from six to eight hundred slaves are bought up annually by the Turkish officers in Egypt.¹⁶

Thus Muhammad Ali permitted his followers to buy black slaves and enroll them in the army, and when he saw their aptitude for military service he began to think of forming some troops entirely of slaves, and training them in the European manner. This idea was known to many people in Upper Egypt, including Burckhardt, who also mentioned the opposition of the Pasha's high officers to such a plan. But the Pasha did not give up easily, especially as he was in need of a loyal force and had just endured the revolt of the Albanian soldiers. Three years later, Muhammad Ali started the project that Burckhardt had written about. He established the first training camp in Farshut, in Upper Egypt,

known as Maslahat Farshut, and appointed a Turkish officer who had fled to Egypt named Ibrahim Agha as its director (*nazir*), and sent to him a number of black slaves for training.¹⁷ We know nothing about Ibrahim Agha's previous history nor the reason he needed to take refuge in Egypt, but it is now clear that he was a key person and the initial founder of the Egypt's modern army, rather than Colonel Sève. One of the goals of this paper is to shed light on his overlooked role.

The sources are silent on the number of those slaves Muhammad Ali sent to Maslahat Farshut, but evidently the attempt did not fail, since the Pasha decided to expand the experiment. A few months later, he invaded the Sudan in order to recruit Sudanese slaves as soldiers while using his mamluks as officers in his newly reformed army. His decision to use white mamluks as officers was mainly due to the loyalty they owed him and their prior training and experience during their time at the Citadel and in the *rimaha* exercises. That notions of race may not have played a major role in Muhammad Ali's decision is evidenced by the inclusion of black slaves in the educational missions sent to France and other countries in later years. Ali Mubarak tells us in his autobiography that the governor of his province was a black slave, and when he asked his father how a black slave could become governor his father replied it was because of his education.¹⁸ This conversation indicates that while it was unremarkable for a white slave to be elevated to such a high position, it was unusual enough in the case of African slaves to prompt the young Mubarak's question.

Some historians have argued that Muhammad Ali approached the building of his *nizam* army without a clear plan; they say that he hoped to recruit Albanian and Turkish elements, but when they rebelled in 1815, he decided to place the military school in Aswan under the supervision of Colonel Sève, to whom he sent some of his mamluks for training as officers in an army whose structure and source of manpower he had still not envisaged. Historians have also argued that he considered recruiting peasants but feared a revolt, and thought of recruiting the Bedouin of the Arabian Peninsula, but feared their rebellious nature. As a final resort, he decided to recruit Sudanese slaves, and brought in about thirty thousand from Sudan. Unfortunately, the argument continues, they died in large numbers in the training camps, so Muhammad Ali was forced recruit the Egyptian peasantry who then proved themselves unprecedently efficient and able.¹⁹

This argument contains numerous errors of fact and interpretation. First, Muhammad Ali had, from the beginning, a very clear plan, with specific goals. Second, Colonel Sève was not the sole or the first military instructor, so it would be unfair to describe him as the ‘founder of the modern Egyptian army.’ Third, Sudanese slaves did not die in great numbers: on the contrary, the experiment in recruiting them was very successful. I will discuss each of these points below.

First, Muhammad Ali’s plan for building the slave army included a series of steps, sometimes paralleled or telescopic in timing. He started in 1819 by establishing *Maslahat Farshut* for training black slaves under the supervision of Ibrahim Agha. In early 1820, the Pasha dispatched a military force led by his son Ismail Pasha to Sinnar in the Sudan for a sole and clear purpose,²⁰ as he told Ismail many times, of “bringing the Sudanese slaves and sending them safely to Aswan.”²¹

At the beginning of 1820, he also established *Maslahat Aswan*, later known as the Military School of Aswan. It was put under the supervision of Colonel Sève, who by then had embraced Islam and took the name Sulayman and was given the title *agha*.²² Muhammad Ali sent him five hundred of his own mamluks for training.²³ He was keen to supply them with everything they might need, such as clothes and food, even honey (see Figure 1). Muhammad Ali chose Aswan since it was geographically close to Sudan, the source of the soldiery.

In April 1821, Muhammad Ali sent another force led by Muhammad Bey al-Daftardar to invade Kordofan for the purpose of “bringing more slaves.”²⁴ In August 1821, the first big batch of nineteen hundred slaves arrived at Aswan.²⁵ In September Muhammad Ali ordered the governor of Jirja to travel to Berber—a district in northern Sudan—to gather and send wood for the construction of the barracks to house them. The governor took along fifteen carpenters and about two hundred axes. The Pasha ordered the governor of Dongola to provide him with whatever he needed, including workers to assist in cutting down the trees and hauling them to the river. Workers began construction after the wood arrived in Aswan.²⁶

To expand the sources of slaves, Muhammad Ali issued a decree in December 1821 monopolizing the slave trade and forbidding slave traders (*jallaba*) from entering Egypt, forcing them to deliver their slaves to the government, which bought them, both male and females.²⁷

On 17 February 1822, *Maslahat Farshut* became a military school when Muhammad Ali sent a new batch of about five hundred mamluks

for training, most of whom belonged to his son Ibrahim Pasha. He had discovered that they did not easily mix with the group of mamluks sent earlier to Aswan, who were already partially trained, so they were dispatched to Farshut and Ibrahim Agha was ordered to teach them.²⁸ There were now two schools: one in Aswan with five hundred of the Pasha's mamluks under the leadership of Sulayman Agha, and a second in Farshut with five hundred of Ibrahim Pasha's mamluks under the leadership of Ibrahim Agha.

On 26 February 1822, four groups of about six thousand slaves arrived in Aswan, having been sent by Ismail Pasha from Sinnar and Muhammad Bey from Kordofan.²⁹ The slaves were formed into battalions of eight hundred (*urta*) and assigned numbers. Mamluks who had completed their officer training at the Aswan Military School were distributed among them. By 11 September 1822, there were fourteen battalions.³⁰

The construction of the new barracks in Aswan was completed later that month. In a letter to Ismail Pasha, Muhammad Ali wrote, “[T]he barracks now await slave recruits, and since the rainy season had ended, time has come to mobilize your force and march on the Negroid societies to obtain as many slaves as you is possible.”³¹

By 30 September, a fifteenth battalion had been formed, and Muhammad Ali ordered Muhammad Bey, director of the schools at Aswan and Farshut, to form four additional battalions, taking its soldiers from newly arrived black slaves in Aswan, and its officers from the mamluks being trained at the same school. However, it happened that the number of the mamluks in Aswan was insufficient, and so mamluks trained under the supervision of Ibrahim Agha at Farshut had to make up the difference.³² This same order was sent to Muhammad Bey in Kordofan, who previously had sent many slaves directly to Wadi Halfa, bypassing Dongola, resulting in the death of some en route. In order to prevent that from happening again, Muhammad Bey wrote to Muhammad Ali in November saying that he would send slave recruits with sufficient food directly to al-Turiyya, and asked him to designate an official from his side to receive the slaves, provide him with a receipt for them, and supervise their transfer to Aswan. He wrote that he would send another group once the boats had returned (see Figure 2).

More orders to establish battalions were given until, at the end of January 1823, they formed six brigades (*alayat*, sing. *alay*), each brigade containing five battalions, and each battalion composed of about

eight hundred soldiers. These six brigades formed Muhammad Ali's first *nizam* army: twenty-four thousand troops, all of them black slaves officered by mamluks.³³ Throughout the rest of the year the mamluk officers supervised the education and training of their Sudanese slave troops.³⁴ Upon the completion of their training, at the end of the year, the brigades received their own banners. Then they were sent directly to the active fronts.

The First Brigade was sent to Sudan to replace the Turkish troops who had died of disease, and the Second Brigade was posted to Arabia to contribute to the suppression of the Bedouin revolt and the Wahhabi movement. The remaining four brigades were sent to the Morea to put down the Greek revolt.³⁵

The Complex Army

At the beginning of 1824, Muhammad Ali started building his second *nizam* army out of peasant conscripts. This is signaled by the construction of first one, and then a second and third training camp north of the existing two in Aswan and Farshut. The first was the camp of Bani Adi, north of Manfalut; a second was established at Athar al-Nabi, south of Cairo, and a third at Jihad Abad, between al-Khanka and Abu Za'bal north of Cairo. Why did the Pasha move his barracks toward the north?

Muhammad Ali found, after sending troops to the front in Greece, that the weather in the mountainous terrain was too cold and not suitable for Sudanese soldiers, and as a result, he began to reduce the number of slaves recruited and to depend on another source suitable for that weather: Egyptian peasants. He moved the training camps to the north to be close to the new source. Muhammad Ali's second army can be called a 'complex army' since its officers were mamluks and free Turks, and its soldiers were black slaves and free peasant conscripts. This last formulation characterized the structure of the Egyptian army until the end of the nineteenth century.

By February 1822, while the formation of the slave army was still under way, it became difficult to find fresh slave recruits, which were urgently needed to replace Turkish soldiers in Arabia and the Sudan who could not tolerate the climate. The Pasha resolved to recruit Egyptian peasants as a temporary measure and ordered the governor of Jirja, Ahmad Pasha Tahir, to collect four thousand men and send them to the barracks in Aswan and Farshut to be trained along with the

Sudanese slaves. This order, according to many historians, signaled the beginning of the Egyptian army,³⁶ but in fact it was never carried out. Ahmad Pasha reported to Muhammad Ali that the peasants refused to register their names in the army rosters, and in March the Pasha instructed him to do his best to make military service appeal to them.³⁷ In October Muhammad Ali asked to be informed of how the matter concluded as soon as possible.³⁸ But in January 1823 Muhammad Ali was told that the number of peasants recruited came to only one thousand. The other three thousand had either escaped or were never recruited.³⁹

From this information we can say with certainty that the six brigades that had been formed and begun their training by the beginning of 1823 were nearly entirely composed of slave troops, with at most a thousand peasant conscripts among them. It appears that the real shift to peasant recruitment started only after the new training camp was established in Bani Adi at the end of 1823 with the express purpose of training peasant conscripts from Upper Egypt. The two other camps at Athar al-Nabi and Jihad Abad were designated for the training of peasant conscripts from Lower Egypt. Two points need to be emphasized: the first is that the recruiting of peasants started on a large scale only after the six slave brigades had finished their training and were posted to active fronts in Sudan, Arabia, and Greece; and the second is that the recruitment of slaves never stopped, so that the army became and remained a mixture of Egyptian *fellabin* and Sudanese slave soldiers. This point will be discussed in more detail further on in this chapter.

Mamluks as Officers

The mamluks distributed among the new battalions were appointed to different ranks according to their competence and ability, their willingness to work, and the degree of their loyalty to Muhammad Ali. Five of the best were given the rank of brigadier (*amiralai*) and appointed as commanders of all but one of the newly established brigades.⁴⁰

First among them was Brigadier Uthman Bey, one of Muhammad Ali's own mamluks, whom he had brought up and educated since he was young. He had appointed him his Secretary of the Wardrobe (*jamashirji*) and subsequently leader of the Pasha's pages. He had been sent to Aswan with the other mamluks, and after his training he was given command of the First Brigade.⁴¹

The commander of the Second Brigade was Muhammad Bey, who was also one of the Pasha's mamluks. For his reading and writing skills he was awarded with the position of Carrier of the Inkwell (*darwatdar*), and later sent to Aswan. He was promoted to the rank of brigadier after his training was complete.⁴²

Khurshid Bey, the third of Muhammad Ali's mamluks, held the rank of brigadier because of his closeness to the Pasha and because of the Pasha's confidence in him. Due to this, some of those mamluks who had been distributed among the battalions with the rank of lieutenant colonel (*binbashi*) or lower despaired of attaining higher ranks, which led to complaints. As a consequence, Muhammad Ali saw fit to appoint one of those complainers, Husayn Agha, to be a fourth brigadier.⁴³

The fifth brigadier was Selim Bey, one of the mamluks of Muhammad Ali's son Ismail Pasha, who had been his sword bearer (*silabdar*) and subsequently joined the mamluks in Aswan. After graduation he obtained the rank of brigadier and was appointed commander of the Fifth Brigade.⁴⁴

Ibrahim Pasha nominated two other of Ismail Pasha's mamluks to the rank of brigadier, Rustum Efendi and Uthman Efendi, but Muhammad Ali refused to agree to the nominations on the grounds that they were among the 'complainers.' He explained to Ibrahim that, "those who achieved this rank have spent their life in our service," and then mentioned that they were "doing their best to achieve our satisfaction, and although there were among them some who protested against us, we want to satisfy them by choosing Husayn Bey." He declared that if he also raised Rustum Efendi and Uthman Efendi to the rank of brigadier it would lead to further unrest, and ended by stating that the measure for the promoting of anyone to the rank of brigadier must be their efficiency and proficiency in reading and writing.⁴⁵

Muhammad Ali chose six of his own mamluks to be assistants to the brigade commanders and gave them the rank of colonel (*qa'immaqam*). An additional thirty were given the rank of lieutenant colonel (*binbashi*) and appointed commanders of the thirty newly established battalions. The remainder were assigned lower ranks, such as adjutant major (*sagbqul*), captain (*yuzbashi*), and first lieutenant (*mulazim awwal*).⁴⁶ These officers accompanied their brigades to the Sudan, Arabia, and Greece.

Muhammad Ali continued to recruit new battalions and to appoint mamluks as their officers. They were trained at the Infantry School at

al-Khanka after it was founded in September 1822, and later at the Staff School established in the village of Jihad Abad in 1825. Beginning in 1825 Muhammad Ali began to accept free Turkish soldiers into the military schools, but they remained few in number and were kept in the lower ranks because, in Muhammad Ali's opinion, "Turks are not equal to mamluks."⁴⁷

Muhammad Ali acquired mamluks from several sources. He bought them directly in slave markets in Egypt or in Turkey through agents in Istanbul who were appointed for that purpose. For example, he sent 135,000 piasters to his agent Abd al-Raziq Agha to buy fifty mamluks,⁴⁸ and nine months later he sent five hundred *ardebs*⁴⁹ of wheat to sell in Istanbul in exchange for more mamluks.⁵⁰ Additionally, high state officials provided him with their own mamluks. As an example, in March 1824 he wrote the governor of Alexandria asking that twenty-seven of the mamluks whom he raised and trusted be sent for enlistment in the army. He explained in his letter that they should be aged between fifteen and sixteen years, and that three of them must be able to read and write to so they would be eligible for appointment to the rank of lieutenant colonel or adjutant major.⁵¹

In April 1824, the number of mamluks mobilized at the new camp in Athar al-Nabi for the newly recruited brigades reached 180, of which twenty were fully literate and nineteen possessed mid-level literacy.⁵² The recruitment of mamluks into the army did not stop at any time until the reign of Khedive Ismail, and especially the recruitment of mamluks owned by state officials. For example, in April 1827, the Katkhuda sent five mamluks, Muhammad Agha sent two, Abdi Agha sent four, and Za'imzadeh and Jurbatjibashi sent one each.⁵³ In March 1828, Muhammad Ali ordered his grandson Abbas Pasha to send seven of his mamluks to the military school,⁵⁴ and when he heard in 1824 of the death of al-Malik Aghazadeh (the son of al-Malik Agha, one of the men in the Egyptian administration in Sudan), Muhammad Ali sent an order stating that his eleven mamluks must now join the first infantry brigade in Sudan in preparation for becoming officers.⁵⁵

As a result of the expanding battlefields in the mid-1820s and until the early 1830s, the need for mamluks increased, so that Muhammad Ali was even forced to accept fugitive mamluks from their masters, attaching them to the troops, or putting them in military schools. Their masters believed that the Pasha would return them, because they were considered their property, but in fact Muhammad Ali ordered the minister of war

“not to return them . . . unless their masters asked for them.” As a result, Muhammad Agha, who held the position of Head of the Doormen (*qapiji bashi*), asked to have returned the three mamluks who fled his household to enter the army, and his application was accepted.⁵⁶ When one of the mamluks fled the household of another Muhammad Agha, the brother of Muhamram Bey, in order to join the army, Muhammad Ali accepted his enlistment but advised the minister of war “to return him to his master if he asks for him, [but] not to send him if he doesn’t ask.”⁵⁷

The return of fugitives did not happen in all cases. On occasion, if one of them joined the army, received adequate training, was given a military rank and sent to a military unit, at which point the master requested his return, Muhammad Ali would refuse and offer to pay the price of the mamluk in exchange.⁵⁸

During and after the Greek war, Muhammad Ali recruited many Greek prisoners in the army, and used many of them in the military schools, on his staff as well as in the navy and the management of the armaments factories.⁵⁹

It should be noted that the use of the mamluks was not confined to the infantry brigades only; they were used in all branches of the military without exception, but particularly in the battalions of engineers and artillery. They represented the backbone of the cavalry (*sawari*) where, as mentioned earlier, 10,610 ‘irregulars’ were deployed. Since the Pasha formed several brigades of cavalry, he chose some of the especially loyal and reliable mamluks as officers. One of them was Ali Agha Jarkas, a mamluk horseman in the irregular forces who held the rank of sergeant in Husayn Bey’s irregular group between 1821 and 1829, and then was promoted to lieutenant colonel in the second cavalry brigade. Two years later he was promoted to the rank of colonel. He continued to rise until he was appointed governor of the Sudan in 1854 and continued until he retired in July 1857.⁶⁰

The Pasha established a Cavalry School in early 1831 in Murad Bey’s old palace in Giza. Varin, a French officer, was appointed as its director. The first batch of 120 students in the school was entirely composed of mamluks. Varin’s success in training them was such that the Pasha was encouraged to send another 350 students, the majority of them mamluks, to the school in 1833.⁶¹

Many mamluks could be found in the navy as well. One of the best known was Captain Abdul Latif (Pasha), one of Muhammad Ali’s

personal mamluks, who might be said to have witnessed the emergence of the Egyptian navy. He entered the civil schools at nineteen years of age, and in 1826 was transferred to the Naval School, completing his studies in 1828. He was appointed captain of one of the ships that had been salvaged following the defeat of the Egyptian navy at the Battle of Navarino in 1827. During the siege of Acre in 1831, he was captain of the frigate *al-Buhayra*, which participated in the bombardment of Acre's walls to prevent supplies from reaching the port. Afterward, Captain Abdul Latif became inspector of the Alexandria Arsenal, and later inspector of the Bulaq Arsenal, and then minister of factories and works (*al-fabriqat wa-l-amaliyyat*). He eventually served as minister of the navy during 1864–67 and 1871–73.⁶²

A final point concerning the recruiting of mamluks in Muhammad Ali's era remains to be brought up. It was usual for mamluks to remain slaves until they finished their training and education. After they joined the military units the Pasha would give them certificates of emancipation, especially when they were promoted to the rank of second lieutenant (*mulazim thani*). But the mamluks whom Muhammad Ali demanded from state officials were sometimes given emancipation certificates before being sent to the army. As an example, when Muhammad Ali asked the governor of Alexandria to send him twenty-seven mamluks, he ordered him to issue them emancipation certificates before sending them to him.⁶³ As for those mamluks who were sent without emancipation certificates, the secretariat of the Pasha (al-Diwan al-Khidiwi) would provide them with certificates, sending them to their masters to seal and return, after which they would be delivered to the mamluks.⁶⁴

In March 1827, Muhammad Ali formally announced the emancipation of all of his remaining mamluks, and ordered the Diwan al-Khidiwi to write and seal their emancipation certificates. He also ordered the Diwan to send emancipation certificates to the masters of any mamluks still in bondage with the request that they seal them with their stamp and return them to the Diwan so that they could be forwarded to the mamluks in question.⁶⁵

Despite the freedom they enjoyed after emancipation, the mamluks were allowed to marry only after receiving special permission from Muhammad Ali. When the Pasha gave approval for the marriage of one of his officers, he would give him and his wife—who was often one of the Pasha's female slaves—lavish gifts. In 1833 Muhammad Ali allowed all

military officers between the ranks of lieutenant colonel (*binbashi*) and captain (*yuzbashi*) to get married.⁶⁶

The Role of Sulayman Agha

Historians have long praised Sulayman Agha⁶⁷ and attributed to him a key role in the establishment of the modern Egyptian army, forgetting or seeming to forget the equally important if not greater role played by Ibrahim Agha, who started working with the new army a year before Sulayman Agha arrived in Egypt. Muhammad Ali established Maslahat Farshut in 1819 and appointed Ibrahim Agha as its director, ordering him to begin the training of black slaves. When Maslahat Aswan was established in 1820, Sulayman Agha was appointed as its director, and given the task of training about five hundred of the Pasha's mamluks.

In February 1822, Muhammad Ali sent a group of Ibrahim Pasha's mamluks to him, and because they were new and could not live with his mamluks in Aswan, they were sent to the camp at Farshut where Ibrahim Agha supervised their military education.⁶⁸ The Pasha appointed Muhammad Bey al-Daftardar as the director of both military camps, as can be seen in documents in which he is addressed as "Muhammad Bey the headmaster of the Aswan and Farshut Departments" (*nazir maslahatay Aswan wa Farshut*).⁶⁹

While the mamluks of Aswan made good progress in training, those at Farshut were still at the beginning of theirs. Consequently, when the Pasha sent another group of mamluks in April 1822, it was decided that they should join the Farshut camp because Ibrahim Pasha's mamluks were still novices—unlike the Pasha's mamluks at Aswan.⁷⁰ The new mamluk group had been collected from notables and men of state and, as a result, the combined number of mamluks in Aswan and Farshut now approximated one thousand.⁷¹

Historians have not only emphasized Sulayman Agha's role while neglecting Ibrahim Agha's, but they have also sought to glorify Sulayman Agha by painting him as a hero. Clot Bey, and after him many Orientalists and Egyptian historians, including Abd al-Rahman Zaki and Abd al-Rahman al-Rafi'i, have stated that Sulayman Agha achieved the rank of colonel in the French army (calling him 'Colonel Sève') when in fact he was just a corporal in the French army.⁷² They have also stated that he faced great difficulties while teaching new military techniques to the mamluks. Because they were accustomed to making clamor and

noise and acting disorderly, they were said to have learned nothing of military techniques except attack and retreat. Clot Bey claimed that the mamluks refused Sulayman Agha's requests for order and silence, which were deemed indispensable by French advisers during military maneuvers. In addition, they resented the fact that their teacher was a Christian European officer, and so they conspired to assassinate him. They shot at Sulayman Agha, it is said, while he was teaching during a shooting exercise, but the bullet passed by his ear and did no harm. But throughout this attack, he is said never to have hesitated and resumed the training exercise, facing the mamluks' plots with unparalleled courage and kindness which is said to have had a magical effect on the plotters who, despite their treachery, appreciated bravery and came to admire him.⁷³

Because of contradictions inherent in this tale—the combining of treachery with a sense of appreciation of his courage—and because of the absence of any reference to such an incident in documents of the Egyptian military archives that provides abundant detail on many aspects of the daily life of mamluks and black slaves in Aswan and Farshut, we find that this story set a line and tone in Orientalists' writings and the works of those Egyptians who quoted from them, which mistakes fiction for fact. The case of Sulayman Agha was not an isolated case: other similar cases can be cited, beginning, for example, with a story of Clot Bey himself. It is said that he was a great doctor in France while in fact he was just an assistant to a doctor who did not even study medicine at school. It is said that when his students refused for religious reasons to listen to anatomy lessons he was giving, Clot Bey was stabbed by one of them, who missed. But Clot Bey was said to have faced the situation with the same courage and tolerance that Sulayman Agha did, for which the students admired him. Earlier, propagandists during the French occupation of Egypt drew a similar image of General Kléber when he faced Sulayman al-Halabi, who betrayed and stabbed him mortally in the chest while he was shaking his hand. In fact, all three cases are entirely false.⁷⁴

It should also be pointed out that Sulayman Agha was not the one who established the administrative structure of the army and its units. When Muhammad Ali asked his advisers (Ibrahim Pasha, Sulayman Agha, Ahmad Pasha Tahir, and Muhammad Bey Lazughli) to give him ideas for a structure of the army and how to divide its components, Sulayman Agha suggested a system of regiments, similar to the way Napoleon structured his army. Muhammad Ali rejected this idea,⁷⁵ and

instead accepted the suggestion of some Turkish officers to divide the army into blocks of one hundred men, battalions of eight blocks, and brigades of five battalions, similar to the structure of Sultan Selim's army. So, he ordered Ibrahim Pasha to arrange the army on the system of Sultan Selim's army and to distribute the mamluks in Aswan in the battalions in consultation with their officer Sulayman Agha, their engineer Ahmad Efendi, and their director Muhammad Bey.⁷⁶ This was to remain the structure of the army until the reign of Ismail, who then adopted the Napoleonic regiments system.

Sulayman Agha did not continue long as director of the Aswan School or any military school, but was promoted to the rank of brigadier and put in command of the Sixth Brigade with which he moved from Aswan directly to Greece to play a role in the Greek war.⁷⁷ This means that he did not participate in training all the brigades created after January 1824—starting from the seventh to the thirty-fifth brigade⁷⁸—which formed Muhammad Ali's second army, or Muhammad Ali's real army, when the first one was destroyed in the battlefields, especially in Greece as will be explained later.

Sudanese Slaves as Soldiers

The Reality of the Failure to Recruit Sudanese Slaves

Many historians argue that the experiment in the recruitment of slaves failed even before it began because death spread quickly among the recruits, killing them in the thousands. While they were still in the training camps, so many slave soldiers died, it is said, that only 2,000 or 2,500 slave soldiers survived. Thus Muhammad Ali was forced to recruit Egyptian peasants to make up for their loss and to form the first six brigades we mentioned above.⁷⁹

When the reasons for the death of Sudanese recruits are discussed, some historians say it was due to the differences in climate between Egypt and Sudan;⁸⁰ another group avers that they perished because of an inaptitude for military service,⁸¹ and still others believe that they died of nostalgia for the homeland (homesickness).⁸² This last group also argues that the illnesses that killed them derived from a lack of national or tribal motivations.⁸³

These reasons appear illogical and unconvincing, particularly in light of the facts. First, the climate of Aswan is similar to the climate of Sudan, that is, both are hot, both are located in the hot desert region

that extends across the Sahara in northern Africa, and in the east from northern Sudan and southern Egypt up to the border of the Egyptian city of Minya.⁸⁴

Second, Muhammad Ali was not the first to recruit Sudanese slaves, since recruitment was common, as was already mentioned, from the ninth century onward. In none of those earlier periods was there any mention of illness and high mortality. Muhammad Ali also was not the last one to recruit slaves for the army, as their recruitment did not stop at any time in the nineteenth century, even at the end of the century when the anti-slavery movement intensified.⁸⁵ If the experiment failed, one should ask, why did the recruitment of slaves continue? (See also Figures 5 and 6.)

Third, if we accept the point of view that the slave soldiers had died in the camps in 1822 or 1823, then we need to ask why it was necessary for Muhammad Ali to send a letter dated 5 December 1823 to Boghos Bey, his adviser for foreign affairs, asking him to find some American doctors to treat the slave soldiers “since they had experience of dealing with ‘this race.’”⁸⁶ By this date, according to all historians, the slaves had already died, and Muhammad Ali had stopped recruiting new slaves.

Fourth, and most importantly, documents in the military archives provide accurate details on the process of recruitment and training of Sudanese slaves and explain each step, from the conquest of the Sudan, to the importation of slaves, the construction of barracks in which they would be trained and housed, to the construction of boats to carry them from Dongola to Aswan. They include even the smallest details of life in the camps, such as congregational prayers, the reading of the Fatiha before training, the prescribing of meat and rice twice a week, the ordering and making of uniforms, and finally aspects of an integrated health care for the slave soldiers.⁸⁷ Yet the documentation contains no reference to the death of thirty thousand soldiers, assuming they died in the camps. There is in fact a total documentary silence in this regard. Undoubtedly, if such a catastrophe actually happened, it would have merited attention.

There is, on the other hand, an important account of the death of slave soldiers contained in a detailed report submitted by al-Mu‘allim Basiliyus to the advisory council Majlis al-Mashura in April 1830, regarding the number of deceased male and female government-owned slaves (*al-abid wa-l-jawari al-miriyya*) from September 1821 through to the end of August 1825, which was a peak period for the recruitment of slaves.

The report concludes that the total deficit in the slaves supplied for military and industrial purposes numbered 7,244 ‘heads’ (male and female). As for the reasons for this deficit, it found that 4,102 ‘heads’ had died and been registered, and that of the remaining 3,142 ‘heads,’ according to Mustafa Agha, director of government slaves at Dar al-Sharqawi (the residence of the male and female slaves working in Cairo factories), 1,464 had died at the residence and thirty-two heads had been sent home to Sudan “according to the order of the Pasha himself.” After further consulting the registers of al-Mu‘allim Khalil, a military accountant, concerning those slaves sent to the army, it was found that 742 individuals had not been registered and the remaining 904 had been removed from military rolls (and expense to the treasury) “because they must have been sent to one of the government administrations which did not register them, as it is remarkable, since government slaves are stamped on the arm and cannot be sold” (Figure 3).

According to this report the number of slaves who died between September 1821 and August 1825 was 5,566, including 1,464 male and female slaves who worked in factories, and 4,102 who were deployed either to the army or to the factories. Thus the number of slaves who died in the army was less than 4,102. However, if we suppose that all of the 4,102 slaves who died were in the army and subtract that number from the total number of the slaves who were brought from the Sudan (around thirty thousand)⁸⁸, then we are left with the number of 25,898, which is very close to the twenty-four thousand soldiers who constituted the original core of the six brigades.

War Fronts in which Sudanese Slaves Served

In addition to this evidence, a review of the war fronts where Sudanese slave soldiers served confirms the success of Muhammad Ali’s slave army. The first combat opportunity in which Sudanese slave soldiers displayed their abilities occurred in early 1824, around the time the brigades had finished their training. A revolt broke out in the village of Banja in the district of Tahta in Upper Egypt as a result of a conflict that broke out between a group of peasants and some Turkish soldiers. Ali Pasha Mubarak describes how Ahmed Pasha Tahir, the governor of Jirja province, sent a battalion of Sudanese slave soldiers to the village, which they attacked at night and besieged. In the morning, they entered the village, rounded up all its occupants, male and female, and escorted them to the

outskirts. Ahmed Pasha then ordered the Sudanese soldiers to put to death some of the village shaykhs.⁸⁹

Arabia was another front where the Sudanese slave soldiers were used. In suppressing the Wahhabi movement, which revolted against Ottoman rule from time to time, Muhammad Ali ordered the governor of Jirja to deploy Sudanese soldiers there, noting in his order that Turkish troops could not stay long in that country owing to its hot climate, and that Sudanese soldiers would be better able to fill this vacuum because of the similarity of the climate between Sudan and Arabia. Accordingly, the Second Brigade under the command of Brigadier Muhammad Bey moved to Arabia in late 1823.⁹⁰ Muhammad Ali continued to send Sudanese troops to Arabia until the Egyptian army was withdrawn in 1840. In November 1835, Muhammad Ali faced renewed trouble in Arabia, but since he preferred to keep his regular troops in Syria, he ordered the governor of Sudan to form a full brigade made up of slaves and send them directly from Sawakin to Jidda without officers, since he would provide them from Egypt, sending them from Suez in time to meet the soldiers in Jidda.⁹¹

The third front for the Sudanese soldiers was the Sudan itself. Muhammad Ali wished to alleviate the demands on the Sudan governors by providing them with trained military forces, and also wishing to utilize the services of the newly trained slave soldiers, he dispatched some of them to the Sudan. Uthman Bey, commander of the First Brigade, was ordered on 5 January 1824 to move to Sinnar and Kordofan even though at this time he was in dire need of troops to suppress the Greek revolt.⁹² Sudanese slave soldiers remained the bulwark of the army in the Sudan until the Egyptians withdrew in 1885.⁹³

The fourth field was in Greece, to which Muhammad Ali sent four of his six brigades. All the information we have of these four brigades is that they were formed at the training camp in Aswan and consisted of black slave soldiers and mamluk officers. What is missing is the period between the time they finished their training in Aswan and their arrival in Greece. Historians claim that the forces fighting in Greece were Egyptian peasants, but there is much evidence that in fact the four brigades were Sudanese slaves. The Austrian consul in Greece wrote to Chancellor Metternich, after the second contingent of Egyptian forces had landed there on 30 April 1825,⁹⁴ that the force was composed of two thousand horsemen and eleven thousand infantry troops, including eight thousand Sudanese slaves

or 'Negroes,' as he described them.⁹⁵ In addition, the special guard of Ibrahim Pasha during the war consisted of a number of Sudanese soldiers, ranging between five hundred and eight hundred in number.⁹⁶

I conclude from this that the first army that Muhammad Ali sent to Greece in 1824 consisted of those four brigades that numbered some sixteen thousand Sudanese slave soldiers. We have a witness that saw a later force arrive, and which included eight thousand Sudanese in addition to some irregular cavalry and marines. Subsequently, Muhammad Ali had to send supplementary forces, mostly Egyptian peasants, to support the four brigades posted earlier. The Egyptian forces in Greece eventually totaled forty-two thousand (Sudanese, Turkish, and Egyptian). Because of the cruelty and brutality of the war thirty thousand of them (71 percent) are said to have died during the war period 1824–28, with only two thousand returning safely to Egypt.⁹⁷ We can assume that the Sudanese soldiers suffered the highest death rates, and it seems likely that three quarters or more of the sixteen thousand Sudanese soldiers died in Greece. This can be attributed to the ruggedness of the terrain, and the markedly different climate conditions between Egypt and Greece, and more especially between the Sudan and Greece, particularly in winter when snow covered the mountains.

Historians have said that a huge number of Sudanese soldiers died in the training camps, because of the difference of climate between Egypt and Sudan, and their inability to perform military service, leaving no more than two thousand to three thousand in the Egyptian army. But I would argue that of the sixteen thousand Sudanese troops Muhammad Ali sent to Greece, only about three thousand returned to Egypt.

It is true that after 1824 Muhammad Ali came to concentrate on recruiting Egyptian peasants, but it is not true that he stopped recruiting Sudanese slave soldiers. Although all the soldiers recruited for the seventh and following brigades were peasants, the Pasha used to make up for shortages in Sudanese brigades by recruiting peasants. He also used to make up for shortages in the peasants' brigades by recruiting Sudanese slaves. This is very clear from an order issued on 7 September 1825 in which he requested, "[S]end two thousand Sudanese slaves to complete the shortage in the brigades in Egypt, because the shortage in the brigades in Greece has been made up from the brigades in Egypt, and it is necessary to complete those in Egypt with slaves."⁹⁸

The fifth war front was Syria. Some reports from Syria mention that there were some fifteen thousand black slaves in Ibrahim Pasha's army

(see Figure 4). In 1835, an inspection report on the Eighth Brigade, which was established after 1824 and posted to Greece in 1825, and then to Syria in 1832, shows that there were forty-three black slave soldiers in the brigade, and that they consisted of two sergeants, two corporals, one drummer, and thirty-eight soldiers, two of whom were recruited in 1823, one in 1824, and the others recruited and attached to the brigade between 1834 and 1835. The first three slaves were brought from Sudan, but the others were brought from different cities in Syria.⁹⁹ Another document mentions that the Egyptian administration in Syria had bought many black slaves in the Syrian slave markets.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

Muhammad Ali's first *nizam* army was completely composed of slaves. Its officers were white mamluks and all its soldiers were Sudanese slaves. The experiment was very successful, and, despite reports to the contrary, the Sudanese soldiers did not die in the thousands at the training camps. The expansion of the war fronts in the 1820s from Arabia to Sudan and Greece, and in the 1830s to Syria forced Muhammad Ali to recruit other elements: Egyptians, Turks, Moroccans, and Syrians, some of whom were regular and others irregulars. During the Greek campaign, while the number of Sudanese soldiers decreased, the number of Egyptian soldiers increased, and the same thing occurred in Syria. On the other hand, while the number of Turkish soldiers in the Sudan decreased, the number of Sudanese soldiers increased, and the same may be said for Arabia during the same period.

Notes

- 1 al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 2: 273–74, 3: 265–66; Surur, *Tarikh al-dawla al-fatimiyya*, 131; Majid, *Nuzum al-Fatimiyyin*, 1: 199–200.
- 2 al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 3: 265–66.
- 3 For more details on mamluk households see Holt, “The Beylicate in Ottoman Egypt,” 176–219; Winter, “Turks, Arabs, and Mamluks in the Army of Ottoman Egypt,” 97–112; Hathaway, “Military Households in Ottoman Egypt,” 39–52; and Hathaway, *Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt*.
- 4 For more details see al-Jabarti, *Aja'ib al-athar*, 206–13.
- 5 Sa'd, *Tabawwal al-takwin al-misri*, 283.
- 6 Ubayd, *Qissat ibtilal Muhammad Ali li-l-Yunan*, 76.
- 7 Shukri, et al., *Bina' dawlat Misr Muhammad Ali*, 153.

- 8 Ubayd, *Qissat ibtilal Mubammad Ali li-l-Yunan*, 76.
- 9 Shukri, et al., *Bina' dawlat Misr Mubammad Ali*, 153, 165–66.
- 10 al-Jabarti, *Aja'ib al-athar*, 4: 187.
- 11 Latif Pasha was one of Muhammad Ali's mamluks. After the recovery of Mecca and Medina from the Wahhabis, Muhammad Ali sent him to the Ottoman sultan with the keys to the Ka'ba. The sultan subsequently awarded him the title pasha (al-Jabarti, *Aja'ib al-athar*, 4: 278, 287–91.)
- 12 al-Jabarti, *Aja'ib al-athar*, 4: 280 .
- 13 al-Jabarti, *Aja'ib al-athar*, 4: 493.
- 14 Cairo, Dar al-Mahfuzat al-Umumiyya (hereafter DMU), Milaffat al-Muwawazafin (MM), File of Hamza Pasha, former governor of Minufiyya province, File 715, Box 106, Shelf 2, Stand 5.
- 15 al-Jabarti, *Aja'ib al-athar*, 4: 406–407.
- 16 Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia*, 305–306.
- 17 Shukri, et al., *Bina' dawlat Misr Mubammad Ali*, 149.
- 18 Mubarak, *al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya*, 9: 39.
- 19 Shukri, et al., *Bina' dawlat Misr Mubammad Ali*, 151; Ali Shalabi, *al-Misriyyun wa-l-jundiyya*, 26–27; al-Raf'i, *Asr Mubammad Ali*, 382–83; Ubayd, *Qissat ibtilal Mubammad Ali li-l-Yunan*, 71–72.
- 20 al-Jamal, *Tarikh Sudan Wadi al-Nil*, 2: 25; al-Raf'i, *Asr Mubammad Ali*, 173.
- 21 Dar al-Watha'iq al-Qawmiyya (hereafter DWQ), Mahafiz al-Abhath (MA), Mahfaza (Box) 1, letter from Muhammad Ali to the governor of Dongola, 15 Dhu al-Qa'da 1237/3 August 1822.
- 22 In 1824 Colonel Sève became Brigadier Sulayman Bey and in 1834 he was raised to the rank of pasha (al-Raf'i, *Asr Mubammad Ali*, 326–27).
- 23 Tusun, *al-Jaysh al-misri*, 3.
- 24 al-Jamal, *Tarikh Sudan Wadi al-Nil*, 25; al-Raf'i, *Asr Mubammad Ali*, 173.
- 25 Tamman, “al-Raqiq wa-l-jundiyya,” 131.
- 26 Nasr, *al-Wujud al-misri fi Ifriqiya*, 35.
- 27 DWQ, MA, Box 1. Order from Muhammad Ali to the governor of Dongola, 15 Rabi' I 1237/10 December 1821; letter from Muhammad Ali to Ibrahim Pasha, 23 Rabi' I 1237/18 December 1821.
- 28 DWQ, MA, Box 1, letter from Muhammad Ali to Ibrahim Agha, 25 Jumada I 1237/17 February 1822.
- 29 DWQ, MA, Box 1, letter from Muhammad Ali to Muhammad Bey, 4 Jumada II 1237/26 February 1822.
- 30 DWQ, MA, Box 1, letter from Muhammad Ali to Muhammad Bey, in 24 Dhu al-Hijja 1237/11 September 1822.
- 31 DWQ, Mahafiz al-Dhawat, Box 5. Document 8/1/3. Order from Muhammad Ali to Ismail Pasha, governor of the Sudan, 12 Muharram 1238/29 September 1822.
- 32 DWQ, MA, Box 1, letter from Muhammad Ali to Muhammad Bey, Nazir Maslahatai Aswan wa Farshut, 13 Muharram 1238/30 September 1822.

33 DWQ, Majmu‘at Watha’iq an al-Hijaz 1807–1822, 32.

34 Tusun, *al-Jaysh al-misri*, 37.

35 DWQ, Majmu‘at Watha’iq an al-Hijaz, 32; Tusun, *al-Jaysh al-misri*, 6–7, 37; Ubayd, *Qissat ibtilal Mubammad Ali li-l-Yunan*, 74–75, 78.

36 Sami, *Taqwim al-Nil*, 2: 295; Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, 127, n. 68; Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s Men*, 89; Alwan, *al-Tajnid al-askari*, 23.

37 DWQ, al-Ma‘yya al-Saniyya (hereafter MS), register 10, letter from Muhammad Ali to Ibrahim Pasha, 6 Rajab 1237/29 March 1822.

38 DWQ, MS, register 10: 78. Document 396, letter from Muhammad Ali to the governor of Jirja, 23 Muharram 1238/10 October 1822.

39 DWQ, MS, register 10: 93. Document 487, letter from Muhammad Ali to the governor of Jirja, 19 Jumada I 1238/1 February 1822.

40 Muhammad Ali chose Colonel Sève, known as Sulayman Agha to be a colonel (*amir-alay*) in the Sixth Brigade.

41 DWQ, MA, Box 1. Order from Muhammad Ali to Uthman Bey, 15 Ramadan 1239/14 May 1824.

42 DWQ, MA, Box 1. Document dated 28 Safar 1239/3 November 1823.

43 DWQ, Majmu‘at Watha’iq al-Jaysh al-Misri, 24. Document dated 30 Sha‘ban 1238/12 May 1823.

44 DWQ, MA, Box 1. Document dated 16 Rabi‘ II 1239/20 December 1823.

45 DWQ, Majmu‘at Watha’iq al-Jaysh al-Misri, 38. Document dated 28 Safar 1239/3 November 1823.

46 Some information about these mamluk officers can be found in documents in Box 1 of the *Mahafiz al-Abhath*.

47 Zaki, “al-Jaysh alladhi qadahu Ibrahim Basha,” in *Dhikra al-batal al-fatih Ibrahim Basha*, 142; al-Suruji, *al-Jaysh al-misri*, 168, 183.

48 DWQ, MS, register S1/50/7: 40. Document no. 385, 21 Sha‘ban 1241/31 March 1826.

49 One *ardeb* = 155 kg.

50 DWQ, MS, register S1/47/10: 49. Document no. 436, 20 Jumada I 1242/20 December 1826.

51 DWQ, MS, register S1/48/1. Document no. 195, 29 Jumada II 1239/1 March 1824.

52 DWQ, Majmu‘at Watha’iq al-Jaysh al-Misri, 46.

53 DWQ, Diwan al-Khidiwi (hereafter DK), register S2/30/3: 8. Document no. 83, 15 Ramadan 1242/12 April 1827.

54 DWQ, MS, register S1/48/3: 80. Document no. 466, 5 Ramadan 1243/21 March 1828.

55 DWQ, MA, Box 1, 23 Rabi‘ II 1240/15 December 1824.

56 DWQ, MS, register S1/47/6: 19. Document no. 210, 22 Muharram 1240/16 September 1824.

57 DWQ, MS, register S1/47/6: 22. Document no. 238, 24 Jumada II 1240/13 February 1825.

58 DWQ, MS, register S1/79/1: 35. Document no. 111, 24 Rabi' II 1250/30 August 1834; see also S1/48/4: 130. Document no. 585, 24 Rabi' II 1250/30 August 1834.

59 Sa'd, *Tabawwal al-takwin al-misri*, 69.

60 DMU, MM, File 1228, Box 115, Shelf 4, Stand 5, Ali Pasha Jarkas, the governor of Sudan. See also "Ali Jarkas Pasha," in Hill, *Biographical Dictionary*, 47–48.

61 Shukri, et al., *Bina' dawlat Misr Mubammad Ali*, 153, 165–66.

62 Mahmud, "al-Bahriyya al-misriyya," 676–77.

63 DWQ, MS, register S1/48/1. Document no. 195, 29 Jumada II 1239/1 March 1824.

64 DWQ, DK, register S2/30/3: 41. Document no. 485, 3 Ramadan 1242/31 March 1827.

65 DWQ, DK, register S2/30/3: 68. Document no. 793, 7 Shawwal 1242/4 May 1827.

66 Najm, *Idarat al-aqalim fi Misr*, 348.

67 Sulayman is given the title agha here since he was not raised to the rank of bey until 1824. The author is studying his role in the Egyptian army during the period 1820–24.

68 DWQ, MA, Box 1, letter from Muhammad Ali to Ibrahim Agha, Nazir Maslahat Farshut, 25 Jumada I 1237/17 February 1822.

69 DWQ, MA, Box 1, letter from Muhammad Ali to Muhammad Bey, Nazir Maslahatai Aswan wa Farshut, 13 Muharram 1238/30 September 1822.

70 DWQ, MA, Box 1, letter from Muhammad Ali to Ibrahim Pasha, 18 Rajab 1237/10 April 1822.

71 Tusun, *al-Jaysh al-misri*, 3.

72 Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, 127.

73 A-B. Clot, *Aperçu général sur l'Égypte*, 2: 202–203; Zaki, "al-Jaysh alladhi qadahu Ibrahim Basha," 33; al-Rafi'i, *Asr Mubammad Ali*, 227–28; Shalabi, *al-Misriyyun wa-l-jundiyya*, 23.

74 For more details see Helal, "Muhabama jadida li-Sulayman al-Halabi," *al-Ruznama* 8 (forthcoming).

75 Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 82, 90–91.

76 DWQ, MS, register S1/48/1. Document no. 235, letter from Muhammad Ali to Ibrahim Pasha, 5 Sha'ban 1237/27 April 1822.

77 Ubayd, *Qissat ihtilal Mubammad Ali li-l-Yunan*, 74–75; Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 137.

78 al-Rafi'i, *Asr Mubammad Ali*, 355–57; Ubayd, *Qissat ihtilal Mubammad Ali li-l-Yunan*, 78.

79 Shukri, et al., *Bina' dawlat Misr Mubammad Ali*, 152; al-Rafi'i, *Asr Mubammad Ali*, 92; al-Suruji, *al-Jaysh al-misri*, 17; Shalabi, *al-Misriyyun wa-l-jundiyya*, 28; Ramadan, *al-Jaysh al-misri*, 9; Ubayd, *Qissat ihtilal Mubammad Ali li-l-Yunan*, 71, 74; Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 92.

80 Shukri, et al., *Bina' dawlat Misr Muhammad Ali*, 152; al-Rafi'i, *Asr Mubammad Ali*, 92, 330.

81 al-Rafi'i, *Asr Muhammad Ali*, 330; Shalabi, *al-Misriyyun wa-l-jundiyia*, 28.

82 Ubayd, *Qissat ibtilal Muhammad Ali li-l-Yunan*, 71.

83 Ramadan, *al-Jaysh al-misri*, 9.

84 Ghallab, et al., *Jughbrafiyyat Misr wa hawd al-Nil*, 59.

85 For more details see Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 164–89.

86 Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 89.

87 Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 151–56.

88 Tusun, *al-Jaysh al-misri*, 12; Shukri, et al., *Bina' dawlat Misr Muhammad Ali*, 152; Shalabi, *al-Misriyyun wa-l-jundiyia*, 28; Ubayd, *Qissat ibtilal Mubammad Ali li-l-Yunan*, 72; Husayn, *Bina' al-dawla*, 140.

89 Mubarak, *al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya*, 9: 68.

90 Tamman, “al-Raqiq wa-l-jundiyia,” 150–151.

91 Sami, *Taqwim al-Nil*, 2: 470.

92 Tamman, “al-Raqiq wa-l-jundiyia,” 151.

93 See, for example, DWQ, MS, register S1/1/11: 26. Document no. 4, order from Sa'id Pasha to the governor of Khartoum to form two brigades of Sudanese slaves; see also al-Jamal, *Tarikh Sudan Wadi al-Nil*, 122–23, in which he states that slave soldiers formed the majority of the Egyptian army in the Sudan during Ismail's era.

94 They arrived in Greece late because they had to wait in Rhodes for a year to find the suitable time to attack, waiting until the Greek ships moved away from the coast. See al-Rafi'i, *Asr Muhammad Ali*, 194–97.

95 Barakat, *Harb al-Mura*, 125.

96 Hasan, al-Jaysh al-misri,” 59.

97 Shalabi, *al-Misriyyun wa-l-jundiyia*, 185.

98 DWQ, Majmu'at Watha'iq al-Jaysh al-Misri, 63.

99 Rustum and Zaki, *al-Mumabbidat*, 92–94.

100 DWQ, Watha'iq al-Sham, Box 60. Document 4, 6 Ramadan 1252/15 December 1836.

2

Sudanese, Habasha, Takarna, and Barabira: Trans-Saharan Africans in Cairo as Shown in the 1848 Census*

Terence Walz

The unpublished 1848 census, the first nationwide household census taken in Egypt in modern times, is a major source of data on the social transformation of Egypt in the nineteenth century.¹ For those interested in slavery, it contains a precious accounting of enslaved and emancipated trans-Saharan Africans in the country's cities and villages. As such, it offers a remarkable picture of slavery in its final decades, not long before the system was forced to change as a result of international pressure.

The forty-four registers of the Cairo census that are preserved in the Egyptian National Archives were examined at length by a Franco-Egyptian team headed by Ghislaine Alleaume and Philippe Fargues, and their publications shed considerable light on the demography of Cairo at mid century.² The census registers and their history are described by Kenneth Cuno and Michael Reimer and have since been utilized by them and a growing number of scholars.³ But to date no

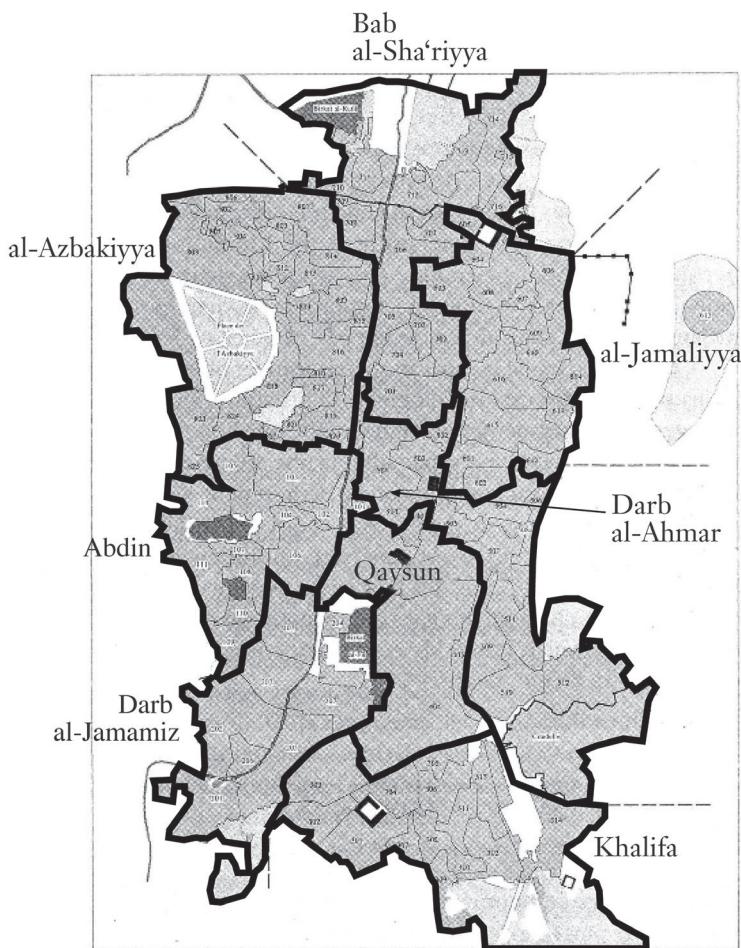
attempt has been made to use these vital records to examine one group or community of people, least of all a group as scarcely known as trans-Saharan Africans.

This article is concerned with the inhabitants of Cairo, which was divided into eight districts (*thumns*) to which were added the outlying and functionally connected towns of Bulaq and Old Cairo.⁴ After a discussion of numbers and origins, I focus on two specific districts in Cairo to suggest differing ways in which people of African origin interacted with the city's freeborn inhabitants. These are al-Jamaliyya, the commercial heart of old Mamluk and Ottoman Cairo; and Abdin, a district on the southwestern flank of the city, on the west bank of the Khalij al-Misri, the canal that ran through the heart of the city before it was filled in during the latter half of the nineteenth century (today it is Bur Sa'id Street). These districts are of particular interest because al-Jamaliyya had the highest number of slaves of any district and Abdin had the highest ratio of freedmen/women to slaves. By examining the data from these two districts, we are better able to control the sheer amount of data that is available, and second, to assess the degree to which Africans were immersed in Egyptian society.

From our survey, it became quickly apparent that trans-Saharan African women were not only 'members' of Egyptian households working as helpers, nannies, caretakers, and cooks, but also functioned at times as household 'co-heads' in their capacity as wives and mothers, whether enslaved or freed. African men in turn worked as household factotums and personal assistants and outside the household in a variety of mercantile, craft, and service professions. In some elite households, Africans formed the majority of the occupants. The extent of their participation in middle- and upper-class Egyptian families has not been recognized by social historians because the data has been lacking. This article is a first attempt to display it.

The Counting of Locals, Outsiders, and Slaves

Census enumerators were instructed to gather information on each household, beginning with the name of the owner, the head of household, and the number of free and enslaved members, and to include the sex, age, marital status, and occupation of each and their relationship to the head of the household. The shaykhs of the residential quarters were relied upon to question the heads of ordinary households about their



Map of Cairo in 1848 showing its administrative districts. Adapted from Alleaume and Fargues, "Voisinage et frontier," 80.

members.⁵ The households of the notables (see further on) were exempt from the intrusive inquiries of census-takers. European households were also not entered on account of their protected status, although Egyptians working in their houses were required to be enumerated. In place of face-to-face questions, the heads of notable and European households were merely asked to submit the number of males and females, adults

and minors, living in their homes. This information was entered into a separate volume called ‘Totals’ (*Ijmali*), which maintained a running tally of the number of notables added to each district. The degree to which the scant enumeration of notables’ households undermined and distorted the number of slaves reported in any given district—and possibly even the total number of inhabitants per district—becomes evident in the course of studying the registers.

According to Alleaume and Fargues, Cairo’s total population in 1848 was 256,679.⁶ Using their figures, I deduce an indigenous Muslim population of 225,404 (88 percent), a Christian population of 8,415 (3 percent) and 1,581 Jews (0.06 percent). Although Europeans were not counted, other residents of non-Egyptian origin were. Of these the largest group were Turks (8,617), followed by ‘Sudanese’ (7,739), North Africans (1,243), and others from the eastern Mediterranean. These non-European migrants totaled 21,279 (8.2 percent of the city’s population), and tended to live in al-Jamaliyya and al-Azbakiyya, with the exception of Turks, who also favored parts of Darb al-Jamamiz and al-Khalifa districts. ‘Sudanese’ were to be found in almost all districts.⁷

At first glance, Alleaume and Fargues’ accounting of the ‘Sudanese’ population (7,739)—of whom 5,821 were ‘slaves’—seems low, especially when compared to the ten thousand to fifteen thousand figure that had previously been advanced for its size.⁸ A full accounting of trans-Saharan Africans would also need to include freeborn (voluntary) migrants, beginning, for example, with the Barabira (sing. Barbari; Berberines, as the Europeans called them) who are known today as Nubians. Additionally there were smaller numbers of freeborn people from Egyptian-controlled Sudan, Christian and Muslim Abyssinians from the Horn of Africa who were living, trading, or working in Cairo, and, finally, students, traders, and pilgrims from central and western Sudanic Africa who were called Takarna or Takarir (sing. Tahruri).⁹ Moreover, Alleaume and Fargues’ accounting seems not to have included emancipated slaves and their families.

An examination of the census registers, and especially of the ‘neighborhood summaries’ known as *bayanat* (sing. *bayan*) that conclude the enumeration of each street or cul-de-sac, bears out the confusion about the status of these Africans—former slaves and their offspring—among census takers who sometimes listed them in the columns of the ‘free,’ sometimes among ‘slaves.’ The confusion may have been compounded

by an irregularly applied understanding that children born of Egyptian women and freed slaves were considered ‘free’ but identified as ‘Sudanese,’ and the association of that term with slave status (see Cuno in chapter 3). Likewise, offspring of Barabira and Egyptian wives were designated ‘Barbari.’¹⁰ On the other hand, while children of free men and slave women were usually identified as free, the children of Egyptian women by still-enslaved men might incorrectly be listed as among the enslaved.¹¹

To return to the question of the notables, they were men of high state rank, illustrious religious personalities, bureaucratic heads, and top army officers,¹² as well as men and women related to the ruling family. Their households were typically large, containing extended family members, retainers, servants, slaves (white and black), doorkeepers, and even water-carriers, and could number between fifteen and a hundred individuals.¹³ The palaces of the ruling family had many more servants and slaves. Ibrahim Pasha’s Qasr al-Ali palace, for example, housed 233 slaves, according to Dr. J. Colucci’s statistics.¹⁴ These numbers could be significant. For example, the ‘notables’ living in al-Jamaliyya numbered 14,590, in al-Azbakiyya, 13,787.¹⁵ Combining the notable households in the “Ijmali” volume with the regular census yields a population figure for Cairo at mid century of close to three hundred thousand.¹⁶

Two other factors may have contributed to the shortfall in Alleaume and Fargues’ figures for Cairo’s Africans. First, the final register of al-Jamaliyya is missing. This is evident because the seals of the enumerators and the heads of the sub-districts (*shiyakhas*) are not found in the last volume of al-Jamaliyya’s register series, unlike in the other districts’ registers. The population at the end of the fourth al-Jamaliyya volume is only 23,623, whereas we should expect thirty thousand to thirty-five thousand. Second, although their wives were enumerated where they resided, particularly in Bulaq, al-Khalifa and Old Cairo, trans-Saharan Africans serving in the military and/or living in the Citadel barracks were not included in this census, but rather in the rosters of the Ministry of War.¹⁷

Thus for multiple reasons—misassignment of emancipated Africans in the ‘neighborhood summaries’; the non-counting of Barabira and other free Africans; a missing volume in the census of al-Jamaliyya, a district containing the highest number of slaves; the non-counting of hundreds if not several thousands of Africans in the households of the notables; and

the lack of a census for the barracks where many Sudanese slave-soldiers lived—the Alleaume and Fargues figures for ‘Sudanese’ grossly under-represents the total number of trans-Saharan Africans who were living in Cairo in 1848.

Colucci Bey, an Italian-born Egyptian medical officer and health official, provides another set of population statistics as a table in an appendix to an article he wrote on the 1850–55 cholera epidemics.¹⁸ He put the population of ‘greater Cairo’ at 261,724, of whom 11,421 were ‘slaves,’ a number almost twice that of the Alleaume and Fargues figure. By ‘slave’ Colucci almost certainly meant ‘black slave’ since Turkish slaves were usually considered ‘Turks’ and classified among the foreign population. We do not know the source of his figures, but it seems likely that Colucci’s total for the number of slaves may have included those lodged in the households of notables.¹⁹

Colucci’s table breaks down the population of Cairo by district, showing the number of freeborn, enslaved, and foreigners in each. The highest numbers of slaves were found in al-Jamaliyya, al-Azbakiyya, and Bab al-Sha‘riyya. In addition to his number of ‘slaves’—11,421—I estimate the number of freed and freeborn Africans in the city (see Table 2.2) at 3,600 to 5,000 (summing Barabira and freed), and the total number of trans-Saharan African emigrants who resided in the city in 1848 between fourteen thousand and sixteen thousand.

This ‘community’ was by far the largest non-Egyptian population in the city, although, as it will be explained below, it was not considered foreign (‘from the outside’)

Table 2.1 extrapolates from Colucci’s data and the census data, displaying both the number of slaves in each district and the number of freed slaves I found in the census registers. Freed slaves totaled 564 individuals, the highest number living in al-Jamaliyya and Abdin. Since the registers did not include the freed slaves living in notables’ households, we can assume that an equal if not somewhat larger number could be added to our citywide emancipated slave total, and guess that the total freed slave population approached 1,200 to 1,500. Were freed slaves 10 to 12 percent of the total slave population? What does this tell us about the occurrence of emancipation?

Later in the century, when under European pressure the emancipation of slaves was in full swing, it is reckoned that 1,500 slaves were emancipated per year.²⁰ Emad Helal hypothesizes that the “traditional

**Table 2.1: Trans-Saharan Africans (Freeborn and Slave) in Cairo,
1848–mid-1850s**

District	Colucci's account						Census data (1848)			
	Total population	Slave population			Freed slaves			Total	%	
		Male	Female	Total	%	Male	Female			
Abdin	22,976	159	725	884	3.85	25	81	106	0.46	
al-Azbakiyya	40,827	251	1,343	1,594	3.90	17	44	61	0.15	
Bab al-Sha'riyya	31,494	370	1,069	1,439	4.57	12	14	26	0.08	
Bulaq	30,851	230	602	832	2.70	17	21	38	0.12	
Darb al-Ahmar	20,510	265	947	1,212	5.91	14	39	53	0.26	
al-Jamaliyya	32,454	490	1,219	1,709	5.27	48	99	147	0.45	
Khalifa	27,407	106	302	408	1.49	11	46	57	0.21	
Qaysun	16,084	221	814	1,035	6.43	12	38	50	0.31	
Old Cairo	15,433	354	555	909	5.89	12	14	26	0.17	
Subtotal	238,036	2,446	7,576	10,022	4.21	168	396	564	0.24	
Darb al-Jamamiz	19,043	237	977	1,214	6.38	-	-	-	-	
Grand Total	257,079	2,683	8,553	11,236	4.37	[168]	[396]	[564]		

Sources: DWQ, “Ta'dad al-nufus muhafazat Misr,” vols. 160–63, 168–78, 180–200; Colucci, “Quelques notes,” Table 2, 607.

Islamic system of emancipation” yielded at least 1,500 freedmen a year,²¹ and it is interesting how close the census data may be to his projections. The numbers can surely be further refined, but clearly the 1848 census is providing fresh data on the living conditions of trans-Saharan Africans, their emancipation, and their placement in Cairo.

Origins of Trans-Saharan Africans

The census-takers divided the population into two broad categories: *dakhil al-hukuma* (‘insiders,’ that is, Egyptian subjects) and *kharij al-hukuma*

(‘outsiders,’ including migrants from other Ottoman provinces). For the most part, ‘insiders’ were Egyptian-born Muslims (*awlād al-Arāb*), Copts, Jews, and Bedouin. Barabira (‘Nubians’) and slaves of trans-Saharan African, Abyssinian, or Takruri origin were also designated ‘insiders.’ ‘Foreigners’ included Muslims and Christians born in other countries, and occasionally Takarna qualified under this grouping.

The term *jīns* (nationality) was generally not used. Attention was taken, however, to identify the villages that Egyptians came from, even the towns along the Nile from which Barabira emigrated. However, when it came to other Africans, almost no attempt was made to identify the country of origin except in generic ways. Four ‘origins’ were assigned: Bilad al-Barabira, Bilad as-Sudan, Bilad al-Habasha, and Bilad al-Takrur.

Barabira

Muslims living along the Nile south of Aswan were identified as Barabira from Ottoman times,²² although the origin of the term is unclear. Europeans adapted this usage from the mid-seventeenth century onward. Al-Jamaliyya’s census takers often ascribed the term Barabira to people who came from villages lying between the first and the fifth cataracts, or between Aswan and the confluence of the Atbara with the Nile. Barabira cannot be equated with ‘Nubians’ since at this time the region included several peoples such as the Shayqiyya and the Ja’ali who spoke Arabic and claimed Arab descent.²³ The term *nubi/nubiyya*, widely used in the medieval period, did not appear in the census registers

Table 2.2: Trans-Saharan groups in Cairo, 1848

Barabira	3,000–4,000
Habasha	1,000
Takarna	400
Sudaniyyin	9,500
Freed	600–1,000
Total	14,500–15,900

Barabira were Muslims and not enslaved except by accident or illegally. Perhaps the majority of Barabira came from villages in the area of Ibrim, but significant numbers also originated in Wadi Halfa, Dongola, and al-Khandaq. The Egyptian conquest of the Sudan in 1820–22 and

the new taxes imposed resulted in a steady depopulation of the Upper Nubian Nile Valley. Many men migrated to Cairo or southward to earn their livelihoods. Migration to the north was not a new phenomenon but the scale undoubtedly increased in the 1830s. Most emigrated without women, and although today's Nubians have a reputation for endogamy the census shows that many Barabira outside their homeland married Egyptian women or took black African slave-wives.²⁴

Barabira worked primarily as watchmen (*ghufara*) in the heavily watched Cairo of the Muhammad Ali period, on streets and in alleyways, in factories, workshops, country estates, gardens, and private houses, and the guarded shops and businesses. The gates to the many small quarters and districts of the city that had been torn down by the French were re-erected by the Pasha, and private watchmen were hired in droves. The census reveals that many were without residences of their own—perhaps sleeping in a doorway or on a bench in the locale they watched. Many were sent as watchmen to the countryside to guard estates and factories. A few served in the army.²⁵

Barabira also worked as doorkeepers, servants, water-carriers, cam-eleers, and boatmen, and making *buza*, a grain-based beer sold in many city districts. *Buza* houses were places of relaxation and entertainment for ex-slaves as well as Barabira from Ottoman times onward.²⁶

The Barabira commercial network, which in the 1840s and 1850s was synonymous with the Arabic word *jallaba* (importer, specifically of slaves), expanded throughout the Nile Valley and Egyptian Sudan as Danaqla, Ja'ali, and other riverain people established themselves in towns in the Sudan, in the slave-raided regions of south Sudan, and even in independent Darfur. The mid-nineteenth century American traveler Bayard Taylor noticed that members of the community in Cairo invested sums of money with *jallaba* trading into the Sudan, where Egyptian textiles and manufactured goods sold for much higher prices.²⁷ Barabira owned slaves, and the largest owners among them were the Barabira traders.

I estimate that there were three thousand to four thousand Barabira in Cairo in 1848. One hundred and forty-three were employed as watchmen in al-Azbakiyya, and in Bab al-Sha'riyya 170 were listed as watchmen, servants, and doorkeepers. In Bulaq, some 248 Barabira were watchmen at various factories and workshops, the customs office, or workers in the dockyards. In all, Alleaume and Fargues estimated 951 watchmen in Cairo, the overwhelming number of whom must have been Barabira.²⁸

Sudaniyyin

The largest group of trans-Saharan Africans were generically called *Sudaniyyin* (blacks). They originated in different regions of what are now the Sudanese provinces bordering on Abyssinia, south Sudan, south Darfur, and several Sudanic regions further west. In the mid-nineteenth century, the diverse ethnic groups of these regions were targets for enslavement by the Turco-Egyptian governors, African rulers, and private slave-raiding gangs. Later, the term *sudani* was applied to all peoples of what became the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, though, confusingly, the older usage referring to south Sudanese survived in some twentieth-century texts.²⁹

Census takers did not regularly refer to black slaves as *sudani*/*sudaniyya*, preferring the color term for black: *aswad* (fem. *sawda*). In the Cairo registers 90 percent of emancipated African women were identified as 'black' (*sawda*) and 71 percent of the males (*aswad*). The term *sudani* was used for anyone from Bilad as-Sudan, free or slave, hence the latter were distinguished by the term for slave, *al-abd* (or the feminine, *al-jariya al-sawda*). Usage differed from district to district. In al-Azbakiyya, *sudani/sudaniyya* was common; in al-Jamaliyya, *aswad/sawda*. Twenty years later, *sudani/sudaniyya* had become synonymous with slaves in the district of al-Jamaliyya too, in the volumes of the 1868 census I surveyed. As Cuno suggests in his chapter, the usage may have become current throughout the country.

Can the specific sub-Saharan areas that these Africans came from be pinpointed—as in recent studies of the trans-Atlantic slave trade?³⁰ In the census of the large shantytown in Alexandria,³¹ 110 Africans gave the following places of origin: (Egyptian) Sudan (40), Darfur (32), Takrur (17), Bilad al-Barabira (15), and unknown or illegible (6). The respondents' answers indicated that Sudan meant chiefly 'Sinnar,' the area between the two branches of the Nile plus the borderland with Abyssinia, which was habitually raided for slaves. *Sudanis* also came from the Nuba Mountains and parts of Kordofan, and smaller numbers from Khartoum, almost half of whose population was enslaved, and the town of Shandi.

Darfur referred to the kingdom of Dar Fur, but many of these Africans probably came from 'Dar Fertit,' the traditional slaving grounds of the Fur rulers. Five mentioned Dar Tebella, a border area between the kingdoms of Dar Fur and Wadai; four, Banda, in the Bahr al-Ghazal region. Others likely came from Runga, in the Bagirmi area that was habitually raided. Most of those who mentioned origins in Takrur were

from Borno, Bagirmi, Hausaland, and Fazzan, this latter an area probably drawing its slaves from further south. Half of the Barabira were from Ibrim, followed by Dongola and 'Sudan.'

In Cairo, we might assume that similar percentages applied—that 36 percent of Africans came from Sinnar, the Nuba Mountains, and the rest of Kordofan; 29 percent from Darfur and its dependencies; and 15 percent from Takrur (the Lake Chad region and northern Nigeria). But Alexandria, with its North African connections and access to the western caravan routes, would have had a higher proportion of Takruri slaves. The baptismal records of slaves purchased in Cairo and Khartoum by Catholic missionaries as potential adepts during 1845–55 identify them as Nuba from southern Kordofan, Dinka, and Berti from the Bahr al-Ghazal region, Berta from the Abyssinian borderland, and 'Darfuris' from south Darfur or Dar Fertit.³²

Finally, the census provides the names of dozens of freeborn *sudanis* living and working in Cairo without reference to slavery or Barabira origin. They worked as traders and *jallaba* and rented quarters in the al-Jamaliyya and Bab al-Sha'riyya districts. Some eight to twenty others were lodged in the Riwaq al-Sinnariyya (the Sinnaris' college) that had been established by Muhammad Ali at al-Azhar in 1846.³³

Habasha

The other major country of origin of African-born slaves was Bilad al-Habasha (Abyssinia), especially the Kaffa, Gurage, Sidamo, and the Oromo and Omotic states south and west of the highlands—areas where slavery was long institutionalized. These were non-Christianized and largely non-Islamized areas, populated by light or 'red' skinned peoples who were prized by slave traders selling into northeast Africa and Arabia. A major slave export market was at Matamma on the Sudanese-Abyssinian border, but many came to Cairo via the Red Sea and Jidda, also a major slave market.³⁴

Although references to non-Oromo Abyssinian slaves from other parts of the highlands or coastal areas were not uncommon in the Ottoman-era court records,³⁵ by the nineteenth century such homelands are rarely mentioned. Many slaves called themselves 'Galla,' a derogatory term used by northern Amhara for other Amhara who had intermarried with the slave-raided Oromo, no doubt adapting the name from slave-dealers. Ali Mubarak repeats old refrains praising the character of 'Amhara' and

‘Saharti’ slaves,³⁶ terms used for Abyssinians in the seventeenth century, but in fact it was not likely that Amhara themselves were enslaved in his day since they were the ruling ethnic (and mostly Christian) group in the Abyssinian highlands, whose warlords were one of many groups that habitually raided elsewhere for slaves. But free Amhara would have come to Cairo for business and religious purposes, since the churches of Abyssinia and Egypt were umbilically tied.³⁷

Abyssinian slaves were rare outside of upper-class households in 1848. One count puts their total number at 136 males and 313 females.³⁸ Most Abyssinian slave women were taken into the ruling family and other elite households and, as a consequence, their names do not appear in the census registers. Eunuchs from Abyssinia were especially sought by the ruling family, which may have hoarded them; few are founded in the census.³⁹ A large number of the Abyssinian women attached to the ruling and other elite households established or were beneficiaries of *waqf* endowments. In her study of Abyssinians in Cairo in the nineteenth century, Nuris Saif al-Din mentions thirty-three endowments favoring Abyssinians attached to the ruling family, and others are cited by Helal.⁴⁰

The ruling family’s fondness for Abyssinians was such that one of the few African-born slaves to have a recognized place in their burgeoning family tree was Za‘faran al-Habashiyya, the slave-wife of Ahmad Rifa‘at Pasha, a son of Ibrahim Pasha. She gave birth to a son and a daughter, was freed and rewarded with the title of *qadin*, signifying her membership in the ruling family elite.⁴¹ Dozens of Abyssinians—and more likely hundreds—were owned by the ruling family; most of the top eunuchs, such as Khalil Agha Amin al-Habashi, were of Abyssinian origin.⁴² When Neşedil Qadinefendi, a Circassian slave, was sent to Khedive Ismail in the 1870s, she was given a palace of her own (Za‘faran Palace) and was sent fifty Circassian and thirty Abyssinian slaves.⁴³

Additional numbers of freeborn Abyssinians lived in Cairo as merchants and students, including students known as *jabartiyyin*. At al-Azhar in 1850, fifteen were registered with the Riwaq al-Jabart (the Jabartis’ College).⁴⁴

Takarna

A final group, rarely mentioned by the Cairo census-takers, were free-born and enslaved West Africans known as Takarna (derived from the term ‘Bilad al-Takrur’), usually pronounced Dakarna (sing. Dakruri) in

Egyptian dialect. Following the Alexandria shantytown census, we might expect as many as 15 percent of slaves were of Takruri origin, yet the few found in the Cairo registers were sometimes listed as Maghribi (North African). One exception was Abdallah al-Dakruri, a mufti and student at al-Azhar, whom we can guess was of West African origin. He was living in Khalifa district in a courtyard with buildings called Hawsh Abdallah al-Dakruri that he evidently owned.⁴⁵ In 1850, al-Azhar was attended by students from Bilad al-Takrur, twenty-six of whom were from Borno, nine from Wadai, and two from Darfur.⁴⁶

Darfur was then not part of Egyptian-controlled Sudan, hence Darfuris were sometimes listed as Takarna and given ‘outsider’ status. This occurred, for example, when a Darfur caravan arrived in Asyut in the summer of 1847 while the census was underway. The Darfuris enumerated were included with other ‘outsider’ groups in the town—Turks, Maghribis, Hijazis, Syrians, and Europeans (*afranjis*).⁴⁷ It is another example of the confusion that trans-Saharan Africans presented for Egyptians.

Al-Jamaliyya: Thriving Commercial and Religious Hub

The *thumm* of al-Jamaliyya in the nineteenth century was larger than what is known as al-Jamaliyya today. With the Bayn al-Qasrayn street as its western boundary, it stretched from Bab al-Nasr and the northern wall of Mamluk Cairo to Bab al-Zuwayla, and included the quarters of al-Azhar, Batliyya, al-Ghuriyya, and Harat al-Rum. It also included the old quarter of Barjawan that lay east of Bayn al-Qasrayn. Al-Jamaliyya seems to have been the second most populated of the city’s districts after al-Azbakiyya.⁴⁸

The state economic projects begun by Muhammad Ali in the nineteenth century bolstered the economic importance of several districts such as Bulaq and Old Cairo, where factories were built, and even Bab al-Sha‘riyya, where a large textile factory was located in Khurunfish. Although al-Jamaliyya had few of the new industrial plants, its continuing economic strength drew from the long-established international trading networks dominated by Turkish and Maghribi merchants.⁴⁹

The Sudan trade was another international network important to al-Jamaliyya. It was tethered to the area of the old slave market, Wakalat al-Jallaba, on Sanadiqiyya Street, and many traders from Upper Egypt and Sudan operated in this district even after the slave market was officially moved to the outskirts of the city in 1843. Al-Jamaliyya and the adjoining Bab al-Sha‘riyya continued to function as the Sudan trade center, favored

by slave merchants (*yasirji*, pl. *yasirjiyya*) and *jallaba*.⁵⁰ Among those traders, one named al-Alimi had an inventory of seventy-seven slaves; he appears to have traded into Turkey. In Bab al-Sha‘riyya, the largest dealer was Wadidi Sulayman, a Barbary from Ibrim who had forty-five slaves from Sudan for sale; another well-known slaver in the district was Ismail Radi, a former shaykh of the slave-dealers guild.⁵¹ These three owned close to ten percent of the slaves reported in al-Jamaliyya’s registers.

Table 2.3 summarizes the population of al-Jamaliyya according to the census and according to Colucci. This district had more slaves and freed slaves than any other, due to the many government officials and foreign merchants who lived there. Maghribis and Turks often owned slaves.⁵² The district also was home to a large number of religious notables who often were slave owners. High social status was expressed in the number of slaves owned, both white and black.⁵³

Colucci counted 490 male and 1,219 female slaves in this district. Subtracting the number temporarily held by slave dealers yields a count of 353 male and 1,026 female slaves in non-notable households. Many others in the houses of notables were not counted by the census takers. They would have accounted for some portion of the count in the “Ijmali” volume, where some 14,590 individuals were reported, the highest of any district in the city.⁵⁴ Among those household heads were relations of Umar Makram—Bayumi Makram (twenty individuals) and Hanafi Makram (nine individuals)—and Ahmad Pasha Tahir, Muhammad Ali’s nephew (fifty-six individuals).⁵⁵ Some of their entourages must have included freed slaves.

Al-Jamaliyya’s households held an unusually large number of Abyssinians—both freed and slave⁵⁶—once again reflecting the presence of rich and prosperous merchants and ulama. Twenty-nine of the thirty-seven Abyssinian women in these households were freed, the remainder enslaved. Thirty-two of these women had been ‘married,’ but more than half of them were childless or lived alone without children or in widowhood. The majority of childless women appear to have been living in the households of masters or ex-masters, and very likely were or had been sexual partners of their owners. From the census source we are unable to know whether they had always been childless, or whether their children had married out of the household, or had predeceased them.

The term used for their marital status was *zawjat jariya* (lit. slave wife) for conjugal partner or *zawjat jariya ma‘tuqa* (freed slave wife)

Table 2.3: The population of al-Jamaliyya according to the census and Colucci

The census of 1848										
Disaggregated population not including notable households										
Freeborn		Slaves		Freed slaves			Notable households (aggregated)			Total district population
M	F ¹	Total ²	M	F	Total ³	M	F	Total	M	F
13,296	9,922	23,218	243	655	898	31	70	17	29	147
										6,895
										7,698
										14,593
										38,856

Colucci's table										
Free				Slaves				Total population		
M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F
12,697	14,721	27,418	490	1,219	1,709				29,127	

Sources: DWQ, "Ta'dad al-nufus muhafazat Misr, al-Jamaliyya," vols. 180, 181, 182, 183; "ijmali," vol. 200, p. 140; Colucci, "Quelques notes," Table 2, 607.

Notes:

1 Juveniles numbered 4,409 (origins and status not stated); they were grouped under female counts.

2 Total population of first four volumes of census (one missing).

3 Incomplete due to the missing volume. Of this number, 330 slaves were held by dealers.

for those who were emancipated. There is a debate over what rights marriage, coupled with emancipation, brought slaves,⁵⁷ some arguing that it brought female slaves the full legal protections given to freeborn women, and others suggesting that emancipation did little to break the bond between masters and slaves. As was noted earlier, the census-takers were not consistent in including emancipated slaves among the ‘free’ in the summaries at the end of each neighborhood surveyed. There were variations from district to district and even between census takers, which seems to indicate that some question remained in their minds—and no doubt in the minds of the general population—as to whether they were free or not.⁵⁸ When the slave woman of a freeborn man became a mother, she was usually freed and, according to the Swiss traveler John Lewis Burckhardt, presented with a *tadbkirat al-nikah* (marriage certificate), similar to that given to any woman upon marriage.⁵⁹ However, Burckhardt was evidently reporting an ideal, for the census reveals that some female slaves were not freed despite their bearing children (see Table 2.5).

Of the seventeen freed Abyssinian men in al-Jamaliyya, the census reveals the extent to which they assumed the outward responsibilities of freeborn men, even though they probably remained dependent on their former masters. Eleven were married, two-thirds of them to ex-slaves of Abyssinian or south Sudanese origin. Ten were employed, mostly as servants (*khadam*) in the households of their former masters. Eleven were living in their own residences—separate from their former masters—and two were homeowners (not renting). It is important to remember that this is a district of elite households.

The benefit of belonging to such a household is highlighted in the example of Sulayman Agha al-Silahdar, one of the wealthiest inhabitants of al-Jamaliyya, whose lavish palace and mosque adjacent to Harat al-Barjawan were described by Ali Mubarak.⁶⁰ Sulayman Agha died in 1846, two years before the census. He was from Kavala, Muhammad Ali’s hometown, and during his lifetime served in the Egyptian army and held several high government positions. The mosque was constructed in 1839. He owned dozens of African and ‘white’ slaves. In 1820 he freed twenty-one and after his death, another thirty-six—mostly African. A half dozen of these were mentioned in the 1848 census.⁶¹

A group of four of these freed men and women resided in a single house on Harat al-Barjawan, near the mosque that al-Silahdar built.

They are Faraj al-Habashi and Bakhit al-Habashi, aged eighteen and fifteen respectively, and Warda al-Habashiyya and Khayrallah al-Sawda. None of these ex-slaves was married, nor was an occupation listed. It was unusual for adult men and women to be housed in the same household, and we might speculate that they expected to be married. There was another married ex-slave couple living on this street, Murjan al-Abd and his Sudanese wife, who had both been emancipated by one Muhammad Muslim.

Another of al-Silahdar's freedmen, Surur Agha al-Habashi, aged twenty-five, lived in the adjoining alley of Atfat al-Atribi with his wife, Qadam Khayr al-Habashiyya, who had also been freed by al-Silahdar, and a female slave named Hayat al-Sudaniyya. A third freedman, Salim al-Habashi, aged twenty, was residing in the nearby street called Harat Bayt al-Qadi with an Abyssinian slave wife and a Sudanese slave woman. A fourth, who likewise had been freed by al-Silahdar in 1846, was Khalafallah al-Habashi, aged twenty-five, found on Atfat al-Silahdar al-Mida. He was married to Za'faran al-Habashiyya, a slave he had himself freed, and was the owner of two slave women and the employer of two Egyptian servants.⁶² No details on Khalafallah's profession are offered, but he was clearly, on the basis of his owning slaves and employing servants, better off than the other freedmen. This grouping shows how elite slaves were in many cases slave owners.

Fourteen of forty-six emancipated Abyssinians of al-Jamaliyya district—almost a third—were living in a small area centered on Harat al-Barjawan, constituting in effect a cluster of freed slaves and their families. It is interesting to note that among them was only one child, a one-year-old boy named Muhammad. The census-takers seem to have viewed them as having higher status than other freed slaves since the men were almost all introduced by the title *agha*. Other small clusters of freed slaves can be found in other parts of al-Jamaliyya,⁶³ in Harat Khushqadam, for instance.⁶⁴

Abyssinian women in general were more fertile than the women of this cluster. Nine of the nineteen married women had children, bearing a total of sixteen children. Many more likely died, as infant mortality was high. Other female slaves may not have wished to conceive if their social situation was unstable. For those that did, the children would have been recognized as non-slaves and been intermixed with the Egyptian population in due course. As two examples, the daughter

of Hasan Khalil al-Barbari was counted as a Nubian, while the children of Badr al-Sabah al-Habashiyya and her Turkish husband al-Hajj Abdallah Kharbutli were labeled Turks. Badr al-Sabah's sons, Mahmud Efendi and Darwish Efendi, were identified in the census as students at Khanqa, the government military staff school whose graduates served in the army or the government,⁶⁵ and they may have gone on to government service. However, it was unusual for the children of enslaved or freed Africans to attend school, even *kuttabs*, unless they belonged to the elite.

Abdin, A Residential Area

The population of Abdin was both smaller and less complex than that of al-Jamaliyya, a district with large numbers of transient merchants, pilgrims, and students. Abdin was primarily a residential area. While some grandees could be found in Abdin's population in 1848, and it had a Turkish population, relatively few of the households had large numbers of relations, dependents, and servants, the typical household being small. Consistent with that pattern, Abdin had the third lowest slave population of the Cairo's *thumns*. It had only one slave dealer, holding six slaves,⁶⁶ and so the count of slaves is not skewed by slave dealers' inventories. The impression of a stable, non-transient slave population corresponds with the relatively high number of freed slaves (see Table 2.1).

Abdin's larger households included those of the governor of al-Sharqiyya (forty-seven members); Khalil Pasha, head of the army in the Sudan (nineteen); the mother of Ali Bey (sixteen); and Ahmad Bey, director of the powder factory at the Citadel (fifteen).⁶⁷ But these households were modest. In Qaysun the war minister's household numbered ninety-three and the household of Abdallah Bey, deputy at the finance ministry, fifty-six. In Darb al-Ahmar Yeghen Husayn Dawud, whose family was related to the ruling family, headed a household of eighty-two. In Azbakiyya, the household of Kamil Pasha (Muhammad Ali's son-in-law) numbered ninety-three, and the finance minister's household contained 102 individuals.⁶⁸

Abdin was known at the end of the nineteenth century as a district favored by Barabira, although there were fewer than forty in 1848, working as watchmen, servants, doorkeepers, and in beer taverns. Their numbers greatly increased after 1863, when the new Abdin palace was constructed. Many of the elite built palaces nearby, bringing hundreds

of Africans with them. When slaves began to be emancipated after 1877, Barabira found enhanced opportunities for employment in the district as domestic servants.⁶⁹

Although it was not commercialized, Abdin did contain a major industry, a tannery and the government agency (*diwan al-mudabigh*) that supervised it, both of which employed hundreds of Abdin residents. This industrial complex dated from the early Ottoman period and was a major private enterprise when it was constructed.⁷⁰ Some time in the 1850s it would be moved to Old Cairo. Another workforce hub would have been at the Qasr al-Ali palace, which Ibrahim Pasha had constructed beginning in the 1820s on the Nile just north of Qasr al-Aini Hospital.⁷¹ It drew on workers living in Abdin and Bulaq.

Unlike the census-takers in al-Jamaliyya, those in Abdin took uncharacteristic care to identify emancipated Africans in the neighborhood summaries. This permits a more precise accounting of the slave and freed populations. We also have information on the number of Abyssinians and south Sudanese in the district, which suggests that there were different emancipation ratios among them (see Table 2.4). The Abdin registers also provide richer detail on slave ownership and on slave wives than is available elsewhere.

Excluding the African population living in Abdin's shantytown—which will be discussed separately—the data show that 21.5 percent of the total Sudanese and Abyssinian population was freed, considerably higher than the citywide average of 10 percent.⁷² Abyssinian women enjoyed higher emancipation rates than south Sudanese women (43 percent versus 18 percent), but the opposite was the case for men: 20 percent of Abyssinians were freed as opposed to 35 percent of south Sudanese men. These differences may relate to the residential nature of the district, in which low salaried soldiers and lesser merchants were able to set up households with slave wives, the great majority of whom were from the south Sudan.

The Abdin data also allow us to view the various conjugal arrangements that were made by and with Sudanese women. Some lived alone, having never married (*azaba*), or being widowed (*armala*), or abandoned. Another group was partnered with children having attained the position of *mustawlada* (mother of a child). A third group was partnered without children and identified as slave wives (*zawjat jariya*), sometimes freed, sometimes not (see Table 2.5).

Table 2.4: The population of Abdin according to the census and Colucci

The census of 1848										
Disaggregated population not including notable households										
Freeborn			Africans			Notable households (aggregated)			Total district population	
M	F	Total	Sudanese	Abyssinians		M	F	Total	M	F
Slaves	31	326	357	8	20	28	385			
Freed	17	72	89	2	15	17	106			
Shanty-town	23	58	81	0	0	0	81			
						572	1,915	1,903	3,818	24,205
9,162	10,653	19,815								

Colucci's table										
Under government control			Slaves			Foreign			Total population	
M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total		
9,452	11,361	20,813	159	725	884	685	594	1,279	22,976	

Sources: DWQ, "Ta'dad al-nufus muhafazat Misr, Abdin," vols. 160, 161, 162, 163 (old numbering); "ijmalii," vol. 200, p. 140.

Source: Colucci, "Quelques notes," Table 2, 607.

Single Women, Widows, and Women without Conjugal Partners

Excluding juvenile girls and widows with children, the figures show that 27 percent of freed Sudanese slaves in Abdin were unmarried.⁷³ For unmarried women (*azaba*), widows or otherwise single women, several choices of living arrangements were available. They could live with other freed slaves (as in the example of Fatima al-Sawda, who lived with a freed slave couple, Ahmad al-Abd and Zahra al-Sawda); they could live in the home of a former master (as in the example of a woman who rented a room from an Upper Egyptian); or they could live alone, without any known connection to the home-owner (as in the example of Karima al-Sawda who lived by herself near Darb al-Hajar).

However, these single ex-slaves may not have lived isolated lives nor lacked connections with the families that once owned them. In Abdin, for example, a cluster of families was linked by blood or bondage to Husayn Bey Turzada, a Turkish notable who owned a residential complex on Sharia Sidi al-Jawhar consisting of several houses and other residential units. He seems not to have lived there, but housing had been set aside for six freed slaves, male and female, and their families. One household was headed by Shaykh Ali al-Rashidi, a *fiqi* who lived in al-Burullus (in the Delta), who was married to one of Husayn Bey's freed slaves (an unnamed Sudanese woman). This household included two other freed African slaves (Halima al-Sawda and Mabruka al-Sawda). Another household was headed by Atuzbir, a (Circassian?) freed slave of Husayn Bey, whose Sudanese wife (unnamed) is identified as having been freed by Husayn Bey. A third household was that of Sha'ban Agha, a retired 'Turkish' ex-slave of Husayn Bey, who was married to a Turkish woman and who had freed his two female Sudanese slaves before the census.⁷⁴ A fourth belonged to Shakir Agha, another 'Turk' who had once been enslaved to one Ali Agha, but whose Sudanese wife had formerly been bonded to Sha'ban Agha (living next door); Fatima al-Sawda was their slave in a household numbering three persons.⁷⁵

The detail yielded by the census of this small street suggests the kinds of social networks that must have bound some African ex-slaves and their Egyptian neighbors together. It resembles on an intimate scale the area in al-Jamaliyya that was populated by the group of ex-slaves of Sulayman Agha al-Silahdar. We have no idea exactly where the women came from in the south Sudan, but we can imagine the lives and stories they must

Table 2.5: Conjugality of Sudanese women in Abdin, 1848

	Free(d)	Slave	Total	%
Single				
Solitary adults	23		23	27
Solitary < 15	2		2	2
With children	3		3	4
<i>Mustawlada</i> (slave wife with children)	12	9	21	25
<i>Zawjat jariya</i> (slave wife without children)	21		31	37
Insufficient Information	4	0	4	5
Total	65	19	84	100

Conjugal partners of female slaves

	Mustawlada (21)		Slave Wives (31)		
	Freed	Slave	Freed	Slave	Total
Turks	3	7	12	3	25
Egyptians	4	1	3	5	13
Aswad/Sudani	3	0	2	0	5
Barbari	0	0	3	1	4
Syrians	0	1	0	0	1
Unknown	1	1	1	1	4
Insufficient Information	0	0	4	0	4
Total	11	10	25	10	56

Source: DWQ, "Ta'dad al-nufus muhafazat Misr, Abdin," vols. 160, 161, 162, 163.

have shared, quite possibly in their native tongue. Much of Egyptian life was lived in such small neighborhoods or *haras*, where social interaction between its inhabitants was the norm.

Women and Men with Partners

Slightly more than two-thirds of the marital partners of female Sudanese slaves were Turkish or Egyptian. As Table 2.5 shows, about two-fifths of all partnerships produced offspring who, if acknowledged, would have passed into the general Egyptian population in later censuses, with the exception of the offspring of freed Sudanese males (none of the Barabira had offspring with their slave wives). When *mustawladat* were freed, we can assume their children were acknowledged by the fathers and considered free. Likewise, most of the children of women who were not yet freed would have been acknowledged. These were overwhelmingly monogamous relationships: in only four households in the district did Sudanese ex-slave women share conjugal partners, and in two of these it was with other ex-slaves.

Among those partnerships that were childless, two-thirds of the originally enslaved wives were freed by their partners (predominately Turkish), but if the partners/owners were Sudanese themselves, slave wives were uniformly freed. Only five partnerships were found between Sudanese ex-slaves in Abdin. Among Abyssinian females, none was partnered with another ex-slave. The census data now reveals the great extent to which slave wives were freed, even if they were childless or had no living children.

Sixteen of the seventeen male Sudanese ex-slaves were married: four to Egyptian women and six to Sudanese ex-slaves, while information is lacking on the identity of the remaining six women. Nine ex-slaves had children, three of them with Egyptian women. Three of the four Abyssinian freedmen in Abdin were married to Egyptian women. There is no doubt that freed men were married more often than freed women.

The Abdin Shantytown

Between Abdin and the banks of the Nile were fields that belonged to members of the ruling family or the elite. Several roads out of Abdin led to the river and to Bulaq. The district's city gate was Bab al-Luq, an area that in medieval days had the reputation for being the home of refugees and in Ottoman times of unsavory characters—consumers of hashish, acrobats, magicians, and prostitutes—but by the beginning of the nineteenth century was known as a place of ruins and weeds.⁷⁶ Adjacent to Bab al-Luq was a large shantytown populated by 1,200 people, mostly Upper Egyptians and other poor migrants, but also including a group

of eighty-one trans-Saharan Africans and nine Barabira. The Egyptian men living there worked in construction, as gardeners, haulers, and in the Bulaq sugar factory. The African men included tax collectors at the Bulaq customshouse, disabled soldiers, artillerymen, laborers, servants, watchmen, cooks, or *kavasses* (guards or messengers attached to one of the local households). Two-thirds of them were without recorded jobs, almost twice the rate of Egyptians in the shantytown. We can assume that some continued to work wherever possible for their owners or former owners.⁷⁷ Others may have survived at odd jobs, begging, fortune-telling, and thieving, and been subject to government crackdowns on vagrants, as happened in the 1830s and later times.⁷⁸

Unlike in the shantytown census of Alexandria, few places of origin were recorded. Rather, they were described according to their color. The military professions listed for several of the African men hints at the important role they played in Muhammad Ali's army.⁷⁹

Female professions are almost never provided by census-takers. In the Abdin shantytown, some African women living with their daughters were noted in the registers as *al-jariya*, which would normally indicate slave status, but three were given patronymic second names—for example Bakhita al-Jariya bint Uthman, Umm Hasan (Bakhita the Slave Woman, daughter of Uthman, mother of Hasan) or Miryam al-Jariya bint Ali, or Fatima al-Jariya bint Imam, mother of Zaynab. Another, al-Hurma Halima al-Jariya bint Muhammad, lived with her mother and sister. Their situation raises interesting questions. Were they slave wives whose husbands had died, or were they allowed to live on their own by their owners? Or were these women daughters of slaves, the offspring of freeborn men who had not acknowledged them and therefore represent a second generation of slaves?⁸⁰ We will never know.

Three other women were former government slaves (*min ma'atiq al-miri*). They were among the large number of captive African women forced into government service, either in the households of the ruling family or as factory hands in the industries that Muhammad Ali had inaugurated and which had been shut down by 1848.⁸¹ Some of them might have been 'stamped' on some part of the body, as Helal has pointed out, to show that they belonged to the government should a question arise.⁸² While the status of the African men and women in the Bab al-Luq shantytown is unclear—the neighborhood summaries merely label them *Sudaniyyin*—the names, titles, and marital status of some, such as

‘al-Hurma Aisha al-Jariya al-Sawda, *azaba* and ‘al-Hurma Qadam Khayr al-Jariya al-Sawda, *azaba*—indicate that these single women, either slave or emancipated, were nonetheless distinguished with an honorific ‘Madam.’ None of these former government slaves may have been married, and we are left to wonder how many government slaves never found or were matched with husbands.

The data from al-Jamaliyya and Abdin suggest that the former slaves of upper-class households were able to maintain the social ties formed during their servitude. But Abdin shantytown suggests that others, including government slaves, may have been left with few resources when too old to work or disabled, and either freed or abandoned.

The Africans of Abdin shantytown made up 14 percent of the combined slave and freed population of that district. Do they represent the extent of the marginalized slave or ex-slave population?

The Census as a Prism

The census provides an extraordinary glimpse of the people of Cairo in the mid-nineteenth century, among whom lived some fifteen thousand trans-Saharan Africans.

It projects the names of individuals in a faceless population, and allows us to assemble a profile of the enslaved and freed population in terms of age, occupation, marital situation, and offspring that would not be possible on the basis of other documentation alone. It allows us to see how many members of this group—forcibly uprooted and transported across dreadful terrain in indescribable conditions—were on one hand integrated into Egyptian society and on the other left stranded in a strange city in which they often had no kin. As freedmen, they entered into careers in the army, traded on the Sanadiqiyya and the Ghuriyya, worked in coffeehouses, ran messages or stood guard as *kavasses*, and served as assistants in or managers of households; others eked out a living as tax collectors, watchmen, haulers, and wood gatherers. At the very top they meshed with the elite, running royal households as chief eunuchs or achieving high status in lesser households through life-long work, administering estates and endowed properties on behalf of wealthy patrons and patronesses. Among women once freed, the social disparities were equally great, from positions as mothers of princes and heirs, to housewives, domestic workers, or practitioners of the occult arts.⁸³ It is worth noting that Egyptian men and women shared—or came to share—the great majority of these social stations.

The clustering of Africans in specific areas, as in the Abdin shanty-town, was not an isolated phenomenon. In Khalifa, a group of forty-five ex-slaves or slaves (their status is unclear) lived in a shantytown outside the al-Qadiri Mosque; and in Bab al-Sha‘riyya, another group of fifty individuals was living in a ruined residential complex.⁸⁴ These lowly abodes may have housed the ex-slave women mentioned in Kozma’s chapter in this volume.⁸⁵ But in these and other districts, other ex-slaves lived in self-owned or inherited apartments or houses and often shared these abodes with other ex-slaves. The tendency of ex-slaves to live near each other may well have facilitated social contact among them. This perspective differs from the view of Alleaume and Fargues, who maintain that “the law of legal dependency inherent in the servile state of the great majority of Sudanese blocked any possibility of their maintaining a community; residential dependence deprived them as well of socializing with their own like.”⁸⁶ The degree to which slaves and ex-slaves defied this conclusion by forming communities in other locales is evident in the chapters by Erdem, Sikainga, and Ferguson. For those in Cairo it will no doubt become clearer with further research.

Notes

- * Initial presentations of this data were given at the American University in Cairo, 11 March 2008, and at the Center for Middle East Studies, University of Bergen, Norway, 21 April 2008.
- 1 Egyptian National Archives (Dar al-Watha‘iq al-Qawmiyya) (hereafter DWQ), Census for the Cairo Governorate (Ta‘dad al-nufus muhafazat Misr (1264/1848)) (hereafter TN). Volumes are cited according to the old numbering system.
- 2 Alleaume and Fargues, “La naissance d’une statistique d’état,” 164; the other basic articles of the data collected during 1996–98 by the French and Egyptian team: Alleaume and Fargues, “Voisinage et frontier,” 77–112; Fargues, “Stages of the Family Cycle in Cairo,” 1–39; and Fargues, “Family and Household in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Cairo,” 23–49. Although their analysis is incomplete, it remains the best overall summation of the Cairo census statistics, and one hopes that the final authoritative tables, analyses, and supplementary materials will appear.
- 3 Cuno and Reimer, “Census Registers,” 193–217; see also Abu Shu‘aysha, “Ta‘dad al-nufus,” 313–24; others using the census: H. Shalabi, *al-Mujtama‘ al-rifi‘*; Barakat, “Dafatir ta‘dad nufus,” 495–507; Cuno, “Demography, Household Formation and Marriage,” 105–17; Nicolas Michel utilized

the 1848 Asyut statistics in his study of weavers: “Les artisans dans la ville: Ateliers de tissage et tisserands d’Asyut à la fin du XVIIe siècle, d’après les registres du tribunal du qadi,” in Hanna and Abbas, *Society and Economy in Egypt*, 51–97.

- 4 On the *thumns*, Cuno and Reimer, “Census Registers,” 203–204. A very helpful map of the districts and the smaller quarters (*shiyakhas*) in which they were divided is found in Alleaume and Fargues, “Voisinage et frontier,” 80–81, and is used as the basis for the map accompanying this article. According to them, there were 101 quarters in Cairo, including Bulaq and Old Cairo: “Voisinage et frontier,” 84.
- 5 On the census questioning process, Fargues, “Stages of the Family Cyce in Cairo,” 12; Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead*, 90–92; Cuno and Reimer provide the text of the census order for 1847 indicating that the counting was done in collaboration with the shaykhs of the *thumns* and *haras* (Cuno and Reimer, “Census Registers,” Appendix C, 213–16).
- 6 Fargues, “Stages of the Family Cycle in Cairo,” 4; this figure has long been known: see Clerget, *Le Caire*, 1: 241, 256, 679, based on the “1846 census.”
- 7 On the foreign communities estimates: Alleaume and Fargues, “La naissance d’une statistique d’etat,” for the number of Syrian Muslims, Fargues, “Stages,” 23, n. 34; Reimer’s analysis of the population of Alexandria in 1848, also based on the census, shows a ‘foreign’ population of 11.3 percent and a ‘national’ population of 88.7 percent. He includes Sudanese among the ‘national’ population: Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead*, Table 5.2, 93; on the residential areas favored by Turks: Alleaume and Fargues, “Voisinage et frontier,” 83–84.
- 8 For a discussion of the numbers, based largely on foreign accounts, Baer, “Slavery and Its Abolition,” 167–68.
- 9 Bilad al-Takrur was very imprecisely envisaged by Egyptians stretching from the kingdom of Darfur to the far western Sudan (present-day Mali and Senegal). It included Wadai (modern day Chad), Borno, and the states of the Hausa (modern northern Nigeria).
- 10 The examples come from the Bulaq registers, especially in the area of huts that surrounded the Qasr al-Nil palace occupied by the (now deceased) former military commander of the Sudan Muhammad Bey Khusraw al-Daftardar: DWQ, TN, Bulaq district (hereafter BU), 195: 1218–22. Abdallah al-Abd (freed by al-Daftardar), and his son Ahmad, a servant at the palace, were both married to Egyptian women. All of them are listed as free and ‘Sudaniyyin’; in another example, Sa‘id al-Abd, a freed slave, had two Egyptian wives and two children, who were listed in the summary as ‘Sudaniyyin’; BU 195: 1028. Similarly, the children of Barbary fathers and Egyptian women were given *barbari* nationality: household of Muhammad Awwad al-Ibrimi, BU 192: 98; household of Muhammad al-Barbari, BU 192: 105; household of Muhammad al-Barbari, BU

194: 790; household of Ibrahim al-Barbari, BU 195: 1053; see also Bab al-Sha'riyya district (hereafter BAS), household of Ibrahim al-Barbari and Aisha Faydallah, 184: 90.

11 For example, in Bab al-Sha'riyya, Fadl al-Sayyid, a Sudanese slave soldier in the army, lived in a ruined courtyard (*baawsh*) on Darb al-Birka with his wife and mother-in-law, both Egyptian, and two small daughters who were listed as 'slaves': BAS 186: 619. It is possible that the children were his from a previous slave marriage.

12 The Daftar Ijmali uses the terms "persons of high state rank, headmen and ulama" (*al-dhawat wa-l-umad wa-l-ulama*) (DWQ, TN, 200: 82 and elsewhere). For a discussion of the term for notables (*dhawat*), see Cuno and Reimer, "Census Registers," 206, and Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives*, 80ff. My own perusal of the census makes it clear that some 'notables' were nonetheless enumerated among the ordinary citizenry: for example, Bayram Kashif in Abdin district (161: 328) or the mother of the late Hasan Bey al-Karamali in Khalifa district (168: 234) and some less than notable personalities, such as al-Hajj Hasan Khudayr, a tobacconist in Bab al-Sha'riyya (200: 75), got included in the Daftar Ijmali. In the provinces, less deference was showed to 'notables.' Whereas in Cairo, for example, the households of the minister of war, finance, and other men of 'high state rank' are found only in the Ijmali volume, in Asyut, the sixty-member household of the provincial governor was enumerated in the regular census: DWQ, Census for the Governorate of Asyut, Asyut City (TN, Muhamfazat Asyut, Nahiyat Asyut), 4864: 365–66.

13 DWQ, TN 200: 140.

14 Colucci, "Quelques notes," Table 2: "Stato della popolazione di Cairo le Chiuse ed altro conforme il terzo censo," 607.

15 DWQ, TN 200: 140.

16 This is higher than the 260,000 that McCarthy accepts: McCarthy, "Nineteenth-Century Egyptian Population," Appendix I, 29–31.

17 I found significant numbers of soldiers' wives—only a small percentage of whom were African—in these three districts as well as in al-Azbakiyya and Bab al-Sha'riyya. The shantytown in al-Khalifa below the Muqattam Hills had hundreds; the shantytowns in Old Cairo housed over five thousand, including ex-slave Hurma Miryam al-Sawda who, according to a note in the census document, was "married to Bakhit al-Abd and had been ordered to live in the shantytown": DWQ, TN, Old Cairo district (hereafter MQ), 199: 419. I am unaware of the location of the Cairo barracks other than in the Citadel. The palace of Qasr al-Nil was not converted into a barracks until the mid-1850s: Tamraz, *Nineteenth-Century Cairene Houses*, 28.

18 Colucci, "Quelques notes," Table 2, 607.

19 Colucci tells us that his figures are based on "the third census," which seems to relate to the "third census" (*al-ta'dad al-thalith*) ordered by Muhammad Ali that began 17 Safar 1264/24 January 1848 and was completed 23 Rajab

1264/25 June 1848: see Cuno and Reimer, “Census Registers,” 201. There was a partial census taken in the Egyptian countryside in 1854 (I examined the census of the village of Kirdasa [Giza province] and of the village of Dikran [Asyut province] of that year), but as far as I know there was no other census of Cairo until 1868.

20 Baer, “Slavery and Its Abolition,” 180–81.

21 Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 386.

22 In Leo Africanus’s time (1506), ‘Barbarie’ was still used to refer to North Africa: *l’Africain, Description de l’Afrique*, 2: 507. An early use of ‘Barabira’ ca. 1636 for ‘riverain Sudanese’ in Western sources is found in Santo Sequezzi, “Estat des revenus d’Aegypte,” in Volkoff, *Voyages en Égypte*, 130; the al-Nubi Mosque, named after its founder Qadi Shihab al-Din Abu'l-Abbas Ahmad al-Nubi, dates from 1649, and consequently the quarter was named after him; nearby the newer quarter where Nubians presumably lived was called Darb al-Barabira: Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya and Its Environs*, 44–45; the earliest court document I found using the *nisba*, ‘al-Barbari,’ is dated 1628: DWQ, Mahkamat Misr al-Shar‘iyya, Mahkamat Bab al-Ali 110: 195, no. 692, dated 11 Rabi‘ I 1038/8 December 1628.

On Bilad al-Nuba in medieval times, Hasan, *Arabs and the Sudan*; Adams, *Nubia: Corridor to Africa*.

23 The differences among the Barabira (between Danaqla and Shayqiyya) continued into modern times when they established rival social clubs in Cairo during the 1930s and 1940s: Faboos, “Ambiguous Ethnicity,” 52–53.

24 Bjørkelo, *Prelude to the Mahdiyya*; on Danaqla and the slave trade, Poeschke, *Nubians in Egypt and Sudan*, 24; Nubian emigration into Egypt in the nineteenth century, Poeschke, 58; Geiser, *The Egyptian Nubian*, 21, 27; Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*, 19–20.

25 For example, Isa Ali *min bilad al-Barabira*, sergeant (*bashjawish*) in the local regiment, married to an Egyptian woman from Qalyubiyya: TN, Azbakiyya district (hereafter AZ) 191: 1443; Muhammad Awwad al-Ibrimi, “away with his regiment,” married to an Egyptian woman: BU 192: 98.

26 E.W. Lane on Nubians’ fondness of *buza*: his *Description of Egypt*, 459. I found ten *buza* taverns in the nine districts I surveyed, the largest number (three) being in Old Cairo; Mubarak, ca. 1875, found fifteen in Azbakiyya, sixteen in Bulaq, five in Qaysun, and one or two in most other districts with the exception of Darb al-Ahmar, which had none: *al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya*, 1: 238.

A late sixteenth-century dispute involving freed slaves in *buza* taverns is found in the court case “Mubarak vs. Khadama,” DWQ, Mahkamat Misr al-Shar‘iyya, Mahkamat Tulun 186: 379, no. 1244, dated 23 Sha‘ban 1006/31 March 1598. In the twentieth century, J. McPherson described how “booza booths,” were popular among Sudanese, Barabira, and even Egyptians: McPherson, *Moulids of Egypt*, 86–90.

27 Bayard Taylor, quoted in Geiser, *The Egyptian Nubian*, 27; a court case concerning repayment due on one such investment is found in DWQ, Mahkamat Misr al-Sha‘riyya, series I‘lamat 23: 236, no. 634, dated 12 Ramadan 1266/22 July 1850; in another, a *sufraji* (domestic servant) invested fifty *bintu* with a *jallab* to purchase slaves and other goods: I‘lamat 43: 137, no. 287, 24 Shawwal 1282/12 March 1866.

28 Alleaume and Fargues, “La naissance d'une statistique d'etat,” 174.

29 Powell, *Different Shade*, 128, 208–209; Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*, especially the section, “Ex-slaves and the Struggle for Equality,” 166–72; Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism*, 17–18.

30 For example, Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities*.

31 DWQ, TN, Muhamfazat al-Iskandariyya 19130: 1–137; the map drawn by E. Napier in 1841, reproduced in Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead*, 98, shows an area of ‘Arab huts’ south of the heavily populated ‘Peninsula/Old Town’ district in the direction of al-Maks. This was the great shantytown of Alexandria. I am grateful to George Michael La Rue for pointing out this area for further investigation, mentioned in his “Following the Enslaved From Sudan to Egypt,” 15.

32 In the lists drawn up by Comboni of the Africans who were enrolled in the Mazza Institutes in Verona, some were purchased in Cairo and others brought from Khartoum by missionary fathers. The places of origins were: Nuba Mts: 6: Tekem [Liri] (1), Tagali (2), Jabal Nuba (3); Galla: 9: Kaf[f]a (2), Marago (2), Maggia [Maji] (2), Oromo (1), Guraghi (1), Malomoh [?]: 1; Bari: 2; Fartit: 1; Dinka: 3; Dar Fur: 2; Barta: 1; Majac: 1; Dongola [?]: 1; Assard [?]: 1; Hummu [?]: 1. Sources: Vidale, *Salvare l'Africa con l'Africa*, vol. 9 of Archivio Madri Nigrizia, 23–24; Comboni to President of the Society, Jahresbericht . . . , 11 (1863): 59–76, para 743, 744, 752–53, 754–759, available on the Internet at: <http://www.comboni.org/index.php?sez=scritti&id=105> (accessed 15 September 2009). On the areas of slave raiding during the 1820s and 30s, Sikainga, “Comrades in Arms or Captives in Bondage,” 200–201; Prunier, “Military Slavery in the Sudan,” 134–35.

33 Nafi‘, *Dhayl Khitat al-Maqrizi*, 45 (written ca. 1851); Walz, “Trans-Saharan Migration,” 117; Sulayman, *Dawr al-Azhar*, 55.

34 Ahmad, “Ethiopian Slave Exports,” 93–102; Fernyhough, “Women, Gender History, and Slavery,” 215–35; Fernyhough, “Slavery and the Slave Trade in Southern Ethiopia,” (1988), 103–30; Fernyhough, “Slavery and the Slave Trade in Southern Ethiopia,” (1994), 681–88; Abir, “Ethiopian Slave Trade,” 123–36; Ewald, “Nile Valley System,” 71–92.

35 Walz, *Trade between Egypt and Bilad as-Sudan*, 176–77.

36 Mubarak, *al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya*, 8: 7; reiterated in Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 42.

37 The use of ‘Galla’ in court documents is found, for example, in the estate inventory of Za‘faran al-Habashiya, freed by Abdallah Bey, who is described

as “of the Jala people in *bilad al-Habash*,” DWQ, *Mahkamat Misr al-Sha’riyya*, Tarikat 4: 182 (1257/1841); on the origins of Abyssinian slaves, Lane, *Manners and Customs*, 1: 277; Hurgronje, *Mekka in the 19th Century*, 18.

38 Saif al-Din, *Abbash fi Misr*, 132.

39 Order dated 1827 from Muhammad Ali requesting “handsome *habashi* eunuchs, preferably 13-year-olds”: Saif al-Din, *Abbash fi Misr*, 55; Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 44–46; he distributed them as gifts to rulers (Istanbul, Tunis) and favorites. In Cairo households, I found only eighteen eunuchs, only two of whom were Habashi, the remainder either Sudani or of undisclosed origins.

40 On *waqfs* made by Abyssinians associated with the ruling family, Saif al-Din, *Abbash fi Misr*, 99–102; Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 106–10 on Abyssinians as beneficiaries of *waqf*.

41 Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 210; for her place on the ruling family genealogical chart, Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, Table 21, 417; see also the website of the Muhammad Ali dynasty, available at: <http://www.royalark/Egypt/egypt5.htm> (1 June 2009). Another African-born slave, a ‘Sudanese’ woman named Hadiya Qadin, was the *mustawlada* of Muhammad Ali al-Sughayyir, the youngest son of Muhammad Ali, the mother of Ibrahim Bey Dawud and grandmother of Muhammad Daoud Pasha: for portraits of the son and grandchildren: http://www.egyptedantan.com/famille_souveraine/famille_souveraine42.htm (accessed 1 June 2009).

42 Name as recorded in his *waqf*, DWQ, *Mahkamat Misr al-Shar‘iyya*, *Waqfiyat al-Bab al-Ali* 15: 72ff, no. 21, 12 Dhu al-Qa‘da 1286/13 Feb 1870; Shafiq, *Mudbakkirati fi nisf qarn*, 1: 70. It has also been suggested that he was born in the Sudan.

43 Tugay, *Three Centuries*, 179.

44 Salama, *Bibliographie analytique*, 277; Walz, “Trans-Saharan Migration,” 94–126; among those who was not a student was the ‘agreeable merchant’ encountered by Omar, the manager of Lady Duff Gordon’s *dhahabiyya*, who had come to Cairo with his family: Duff Gordon, letter dated October 17, 1867 in *Last Letters from Egypt*, 162–63.

45 TN, Khalifa district (hereafter KH) 171: 986.

46 Salama, *Bibliographie analytique*, 277.

47 TN, Muhafazat Mudiriyat Asyut 4864: 367–86.

48 The boundary outlines are shown in the map “The Quarters of Cairo (*shiyakhas*) in 1848,” found in Alleaume and Fargues, “Voisinage et frontier,” 80, and can also be followed in the map accompanying this chapter. According to Colucci, the population of al-Jamaliyya was 32,454, whereas al-Azbakiyya was 40,827.

49 On the impact of industrialization projects on various quarters, Fahmy, *La révolution*; Isma‘il, *Madinat al-Qahira*; on al-Jamaliyya in the nineteenth century, Berque and al-Shakaa, “La Gamaliya depuis un siècle,” 68–76.

50 The census records show fifty-eight *yasirjiyya* and *jallaba* with 330 slaves for sale living in dwellings in al-Jamaliyya, and 64 *yasirjiyya* and *jallaba* with 286 slaves for sale in Bab al-Sha‘riyya: al-Jamaliyya census registers 180–83; Bab Sha‘riyya census registers 184–87.

51 On Ismail Radi, Walz, *Trade*, 216.

52 Alleaume and Fargues, “Voisinage,” 100: 43 percent of Maghribi households owned slaves; 40 percent of Turkish households did also.

53 Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 192ff, on slave ownership as social status, citing Ali Mubarak and how he measured wealth and social standing through number of slaves owned. On al-Jamaliyya and its religious personality, the result of being the location of so many religious institutions (mosques, *zawiyas*, saints’ tombs), Berque and al-Shakaa, 76–78.

54 Ijimali, 140. According to the breakdown, there were: adult men 5,202; boys 2,493; adult women 4,754; girls 2,141; total 14,590.

55 Some of the notable families had already intermixed with Africans. Bayumi was the grandson of Umar Makram through his only child, a daughter, Hanifa, by Umar’s Abyssinian wife, Za‘faran Khatun al-Habashiyya: estate probate of Umar Makram: DWQ, Mahkamat Misr al-Shar‘iyya, al-Qisma al-Askariyya 277: 126–27, dated 28 Jumada I 1238/1823); Hanifa was married to the son of Umar’s uncle, Muhammad Makram “al-Tawil” and his Abyssinian wife, Zahra al-Habashiyya: DWQ, al-Qisma al-Askariya 269: 144, dated 25 Sha‘ban 1235/6 June 1820.

56 I found 78 Abyssinian male and 146 female slaves. Saif al-Din found 73 males and 133 females: *Abhash fi Misr*, 132.

57 Debate on emancipation and rights: Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 189–91; Marmon, “Concubinage, Islamic,” 527–29; and Marmon, “Slavery, Islamic World,” 330–33; Montana, “Enslaveable Infidels,” 78–98, especially 95–96 where he discusses the rights brought by emancipation and how ex-slaves, especially those indulging in ancient religious practices (*bori*, similar to *zar* in Egypt), were perceived by a skeptical religious scholar; on the problems faced by emancipated slaves, Powell, *Different Shade*, 148, 171–72.

58 Bulaq: Ali Abdallah is ‘freed,’ but listed among ‘slaves’ in the summary, with a notation ‘freed’ on the side: BU 193: 519; Bab al-Sha‘riyya: “black slave, freed, age 25” in household of Mahmud Muhammad on Sharia al-Kurdi, but marked ‘slave’ in the summary: BAS 187: 940; similarly, in Qaysun, where inconsistencies were more common: household of Hasan al-Antabli, QA 172: 26; household of Rihan al-Tabi‘ Hamza Bey, QA 173: 247. The freed slave wives in the households of Isa Hasan “Turk,” Usta Ahmad al-Saramati, and Ahmad Efendi “Turk” are listed as slaves in summaries: QA 173: 294–95.

59 Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia*, 305. If they differed from ordinary marriage documents, I have not seen a discussion of these documents.

60 Mubarak, *al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya* 3: 134–35; Lane provides several stories of his “barbarous acts”: *Manners and Customs* 1: 188–89.

61 al-Silahdar freed twenty-one slaves on 25 Rajab 1235/8 May 1820: DWQ, Mahkamat Misr al-Shar‘iyya, Muba‘iyat Bab al-Ali 408: 48; the emancipation of thirty-six others was registered in the court 3 Rabi‘ I 1262/1 March 1846: DWQ, Mahkamat Misr al-Shar‘iyya, I‘lamat 16: 23–32, nos. 81–116, and 36, no. 129.

62 JA 180: 250, 254, 271, 276, and 275. The Sharia Bayt al-Qadi was near the area where Mubarak describes a *zawiya* that drew *zar* cultists in the 1880s: *al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya* 2: 223, cited in Natvig, “Notes on the Zar Cult,” 184.

63 Another cluster in Atfat al-Silahdar relates to five freed slaves of Abdallah Efendi Qa‘immaqam, an administrator of the grain warehouse in Bulaq, and their families who were living in a house owned by their former master: JA 180: 275–76.

64 The residence of Sitt Khadija al-Sudaniyya and Sitt Nafisa al-Sawda, beneficiaries of a *waqf* established by Sitt Fatima: JA 180: 126; nearby were living al-Hajj Murjan Agha al-Aswad and his sister, Usta Fatima al-Shaykh al-Sawda: JA 180: 109; altogether some nineteen Africans were living in this small area. See my “Sketched Lives from the Census,” 32–36.

65 JA 180: 47.

66 Badawi Ahmad on Sharia al-Balaqsha: he was holding six slaves; TN, Abdin district (hereafter AB) 162: 737.

67 TN 200: 17, 148, 96, 127 respectively. Among other residents in Abdin was the English Orientalist Edward William Lane, his wife, herself a former slave of Greek origin, and sister who lived at this time on Sharia al-Qawadis. I am indebted to Jason Thompson, author of the 2010 Lane biography, for this information.

68 TN 200: 96, 89, 143.

69 On the new palaces built by Ismail Pasha al-Mufattish, Khurshid Pasha al-Sinnari, and al-Sharbutli Pasha, Mubarak, *al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya* 3: 214; Isma‘il, *Madinat al-Qabira*, 154; on the upper class use of Barabira as substitutes for African slaves, Smith, “Tributaries in the Stream of Civilization,” 62–66.

70 Behrens-Abouseif, “Industrial Complex in Ottoman Cairo.”

71 Tawakol, “Urban Development of the Abdin Area,” 34; on the development of the neighborhoods west of the canal, Raymond, *Cairo*, 216–22; on the construction of Qasr al-Ali: Tamraz, 22–23. Colucci’s Table 2, page 607 includes the following census of the palace: Egyptian men 163; Egyptian women 55; foreign men 127; foreign women 39; slave men 122; slave women 111.

72 Tucker laments the lack of data that allowed such percentages to be calculated. On the basis of her work in legal documentation, she thought only 2 percent of female slaves were freed: *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 186–87.

73 By way of contrast, among Abyssinian women in al-Jamaliyya, the ratio was 13.4 percent; only 4.8 percent of Egyptian women were unmarried: Alleaume and Fargues, “La naissance d'une statistique d'état,” 177; Fargues, “Stages of the Family Cycle in Cairo,” 23.

74 Mubarak mentions an Atfat Sha'ban Agha in the vicinity of Sidi Jawhar Street but does not provide a biography of him: *al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya* 3: 217.

75 AB 160: 134–35.

76 Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakīyya and Its Environs*, 7, citing the Turkish traveler Evliya Celebi for the later Ottoman period; Burckhardt, *Arabic Proverbs*, 88–89; see also Hanna, *Habiter au Caire*, map opposite page 201 which shows that at the end of the eighteenth century, much of the district was inhabited by the poor.

77 AB 163: 902.

78 Peters, “For His Correction,” 190; in the 1840s, ‘homeless’ people were periodically rounded up and taken to poor houses: Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, 40.

79 Helal, chapter 1 in this volume; Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, chapter 4.

80 AB 163: 899.

81 Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 128–29. While working in Bulaq, they were housed in Dar al-Sharqawi in the Dawudiyya section of Qaysun district, but if the Dar still existed in 1848, its inhabitants were not enumerated.

82 Muhammad Ali ordered slaves be branded with a *damgha* on their left arm as a way of tracking runaways: Helal 1999, 127–28. The branding was applied to both males and females.

83 One occult practitioner might have been Usta Fatima al-Shaykha who lived with her brother of al-Hajj Murjan al-Abd in al-Jamaliyya (JA 180: 109). ‘Usta’ and ‘shaykha’ were titles used in *zār*. On practitioners in Cairo, Walz, “Trans-Saharan Migration,” 111–12; Natvig, “Notes on the Zar Cult,” 178–88.

84 BAS 186: 619–20; KH 171: 829–30.

85 Liat Kozma, chapter 5 in this volume.

86 Alleaume and Fargues, “Voisinage et frontier,” 84.

3

African Slaves in Nineteenth-Century Rural Egypt: A Preliminary Assessment

Kenneth M. Cuno

Although the majority of slaves in nineteenth-century Egypt were Africans, historians have given comparatively more attention to the mamluk and harem slaves of the elite, who often were ‘white.’¹ To the extent that African slaves have been discussed the focus has been mainly on those in urban society, most of whom were women who served as domestics or concubines.² This chapter takes up the relatively neglected topic of slaves in the rural society of Egypt. It uses a sample of the census registers of 1847–48 and 1868 from four villages in al-Daqahliyya province, in Lower Egypt, supplemented by provincial court records, to construct a preliminary picture and identify issues for further investigation.

Gabriel Baer, in his pioneering article on slavery in nineteenth-century Egypt, and more recently Emad Helal, in his important monograph, identified three situations in which slaves were used in agriculture. Slave labor was used on the privileged estates of the ruling class, especially the sugar plantations of Khedive Ismail, and slaves operated water pumps in

Isna province into the last quarter of the century.³ These two situations deserve separate studies due to their distinct character. Many privileged estates were developed on new land, requiring the importation of a labor force. Isna is in the far south, where the land was quite high in relation to the Nile at its lowest level, making summer irrigation especially labor intensive before the adoption of power driven pumps.

This chapter is concerned with the third situation, namely slave ownership in the villages of Lower Egypt. In the twenty years between the two censuses the number of slaves grew significantly in the four villages studied. A decade later, however, the Anglo-Egyptian Convention of 1877 forbade the trade in slaves and enabled those already in Egypt to emancipate themselves,⁴ resulting in the virtual disappearance of slavery by the end of the century.

The 1868 registers include physical descriptions of males, including skin color. Thus we have the materials to begin reconstructing popular, pre-colonial associations of African origins with servile status, and both with perceived skin color. Certain names were also stereotypically assigned to Africans.

Unlike in urban society, where most of the slaves were women, male slaves predominated in the four villages, where by all indications most of them were employed in agriculture. Slaves were part of their masters' households. Masters saw to the marriage of their slaves, though at a later time in the slaves' lives than was the norm in village society. Some male slaves were married to free Egyptian women, even though that appears to have contravened the rule of status suitability (*kafa'a*) in marriage. Although male and female slaves were also married to one another, the sexual lives of other female slaves cannot be discerned from the census registers. Probate inventories in the court records contain evidence of slave marriage or concubinage, in the cases of women who bore their masters' children and whose children lived long enough to became their fathers' heirs.

Numbers

By all accounts the trade in enslaved Africans to Egypt increased in the nineteenth century.⁵ This was mainly the result of the conquest of Sudan in 1820, which established direct access to populations that could be enslaved. More aggressive raiding and innovations in the transportation of slaves in the middle decades of the century increased the supply

of slaves, and the suppression of the trade at Tripoli in the 1860s also diverted more of it to Egypt. While the conventional view in Egyptian historiography attributes the increase in slave ownership in rural Egypt in the 1860s to prosperity and the increased demand for agricultural labor, there was a simultaneous 'revival' of the trade in African slaves to the central Ottoman Empire, where they were used as domestics, which suggests a supply-side explanation for the increase.⁶

Explanations of the growth of slavery in rural Egypt in terms of labor demand refer to peasant flight from the land to escape conscription and tax arrears as causing labor shortages, and, after mid century, to agricultural expansion as creating a demand for additional labor.⁷ However, neither explanation is supported by the history of the rural economy and of the slave trade. Accounts of the number of slaves imported in the nineteenth century show two peak decades, that is to say, the 1830s and the 1860s, in which an estimated average of ten thousand slaves entered Egypt annually.⁸ Although the governor Muhammad Ali Pasha (1805–48) experimented with settling slaves as agricultural workers in a handful of villages, in the 1830s male slaves were more likely to become soldiers.⁹ The 1830s was a decade of rural economic crisis, induced by the Pasha's war economy. There is evidence of peasant flight in the 1830s and 1840s, but little evidence that peasants were replaced by slaves—rather, there were continuing efforts to control the internal movement of labor, including periodic sweeps to apprehend and return the absconders.¹⁰ During the 1840s, while the sweeps continued, the number of slaves arriving annually fell to five thousand. The number fell to 3,500 annually in the 1850s even though that decade was one of agricultural growth and prosperity, fueled by exports. The 1860s witnessed the cotton boom (1862–64), and was unquestionably a period of agricultural expansion and increased labor demand.¹¹ But while the slave trade surged in the 1860s, in the preceding decades it bore no apparent relationship to supposed labor shortages or expanding labor demand.

Another problem with the labor demand explanation is that it was influenced by a now out-of-date underestimation of the size of Egypt's population and its rate of growth. Until the application of actuarial methods to Egyptian demographic history in the 1970s and 1980s the mid-nineteenth-century population tended to be underestimated by as much as 50 percent.¹² Moreover, there was a mobile labor force in the countryside, completely contrary to the stereotype of conservative peasants

never leaving their villages. In 1868 slaves accounted for between 3.2 and 5.6 percent of the four villages' populations, as will be seen, but in three of these villages they were outnumbered by migrant heads of household, who were from 18 to 21 percent of the population.¹³ Thus in the villages, the demand for agricultural and household labor in the 1860s appears to have been met first by internal migration, and only secondarily by slavery. There were other inducements to slave ownership, including prestige, but it was the burgeoning supply of slaves that made them available and affordable in the countryside.

The slave population continually diminished through mortality, manumission, and the birth of free children.¹⁴ New slaves were needed to maintain a slave population of any size at all, and an import surge was needed to raise their number significantly. The slave population in Egypt probably peaked in the 1860s during one of those surges, ironically less than a decade before the Convention of 1877 shut off the supply and initiated a mass manumission.

The Village Census Registers

African slaves were counted in the census registers of 1847–48 and 1868 for Sandub, near the provincial capital and commercial center of al-Manṣura; Damas, which is not far from the town of Mit Ghāmr to the south; Ikhtab, a short distance north of Damas; and Zafar, in the eastern part of the province.¹⁵ These villages are among the few for which registers from both years are preserved. Though not representative of all villages, their data are illustrative of certain key developments in the rural society during those decades.

I tested the reliability of these data by subjecting them to internal tests for consistency and plausibility after entering them in spread sheets so as not to replicate the summing mistakes that are occasionally evident in the tables at the end of each register. I then checked sex ratio and age distribution. The enumerators made an impressive effort to count both sexes. Females were slightly more than half of the population of the four villages in 1847–48, and slightly less than half in 1868. The balanced sex ratio indicates that in those villages, at least, there was no significant undercounting of females, unlike in other Ottoman provinces in which only the males were counted.¹⁶

The task of evaluating age reporting was less simple. Villagers tended to report their age as a multiple of ten or five, which is similar to what

occurred in early twentieth century censuses in Egypt as well as in India.¹⁷ The problem of determining the age structure can be solved by creating decennial cohorts (0–9, 10–19, and so on). Using that method, broad similarities appeared between the aggregate age structure of the four villages, both in 1847–48 and in 1868, and the age structures in the national Egyptian censuses of 1917 and 1927. In both the nineteenth-century sample and in the twentieth-century national censuses, there was a deficit in the age cohorts of the teens and twenties, probably caused by people misstating their age, and likewise people older than 55 tended to exaggerate their age.¹⁸

The similarity in age deficits suggests that the nineteenth-century census registers used in this paper are no less reliable than the censuses of 1917 and 1927. (Of course the quality of individual village registers could vary; each should be tested for reliability.) These registers are an especially important source for the study of African slaves, since slaves do not appear very often in the provincial court records, which are biased toward the middle and upper classes.

The number of African slaves brought to Egypt in the mid-nineteenth century varied from an estimated low of 3,500 annually during the 1850s to as many as twenty-five thousand to thirty thousand in some years during the cotton boom,¹⁹ and the census registers reflected that. Damas was located in prime cotton growing country and its population more than doubled between the two census years. Most of that was due to natural increase and internal migration, but the forced migration of enslaved Africans also contributed. There were no slaves in Damas in 1848, but in 1868 there were 182, coming to 5.5 percent of the population. Nearby Ikhtab, a smaller village, grew by a little more than one third in the same period. Here, too, migration contributed more to the growth, but forced migration was also a factor. In 1848 there were only eighteen slaves in Ikhtab, all belonging to the household of the shaykh, Ahmad al-Atarbi. By 1868 other households had acquired slaves, and they numbered ninety-two or 5.6 percent of Ikhtab's population.

Sandub grew even more slowly, by only an eighth. It is north of the main cotton growing area and probably produced sesame and rice, lucrative summer crops that competed for space with cotton. There were six slaves in Sandub in 1847. Two were in the households of the shaykhs Ali Mishali and Ali Warda and the remainder belonged to upper- and ruling-class migrants, who appear to have worked in the nearby town of

**Table 3.1: Free and slave populations in four Egyptian villages,
1847–48 and 1868**

1847–48								
	Males		Females		Uncertain sex		Total	
	Free	Slave	Free	Slave	Free	Slave	Free	Slave
Damas	794		826				1620	0
Ikhtab	560	15	630	3			1190	18
Sandub	837	6	855		6		1698	6
Zafar	342		345		2		689	0
Total	2533	21	2656	3	8		5197	24

1868								
	Males		Females		Uncertain sex		Total	
	Free	Slave	Free	Slave	Free	Slave	Free	Slave
Damas	1559	130	1609	52			3168	182
Ikhtab	749	77	804	15			1553	92
Sandub	918	64	916	20	1		1835	84
Zafar	304	17	295	3			599	20
Total	3530	288	3624	90	1		7155	378

Source: Census registers of 1847–48 and 1868.

Note: This table differs slightly from the one published in “African Slaves in Nineteenth-Century Rural Egypt,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 2 (2009), 186–88, as a result of further refinement.

al-Mansura. No household had more than one slave. In 1868 there were 84 slaves in Sandub, or about 4.4 percent of its population. Zafar was smaller and less prosperous than the other villages, on the eastern fringe of the cultivated zone with marginal land. It had a net loss of population due to emigration, which was only partly offset by the arrival of African slaves. There were none in 1848, but in 1868 they numbered twenty, or 3.2 percent of Zafar’s population.

Helal studied the registers of three other villages in the same province with somewhat similar results. Slave numbers increased significantly between the two census years. In 1868 they accounted for 4.6 percent of the population of Mit Ali and 3.2 percent of Mit al-Sudan, but only 0.8 percent of Awish al-Hajar.²⁰ Mit Ali is in the district of Dikirnis, in the north of al-Daqahliyya province, and in 1868 its population of 640 made it slightly larger than Zafar. Nearby, in the same district, Mit al-Sudan had a population of 1,423, making it roughly the same size as Ikhtab. Both villages are in the rice-growing region, well north of the cotton zone. There is no immediately apparent explanation for the smaller proportion of slaves in Awish al-Hajar, which is located on the Damietta Nile southwest of al-Mansura. With 3,173 inhabitants it was almost as large as Damas.

The majority of slaves in Cairo and the other towns were female and were employed mainly as domestics.²¹ In the four villages studied, however, the vast majority of slaves were male—from 71 percent in Damas to 85 percent in Zafar. In Helal's three villages most slaves were male as well.²² Most belonged to the households of village headmen (*umdas*), village shaykhs, and other landholders. There was a rather strictly observed sexual division of labor in the rural society in which men performed the tasks of plowing, sowing, and irrigation, while women as well as children participated with men in the harvests and the transplanting of rice shoots. Women also tended livestock, gardened, and attended the weekly markets to buy and sell along with men. The predominance of male slaves in the villages and the predominance of landholding households in slave ownership points to the employment of male slaves in agriculture. Helal also found anecdotal evidence showing that slaves were used in agriculture.²³

Undoubtedly some rural notables also employed slaves as domestic servants in emulation of the ruling class, and some of the female slaves were concubines. The village census registers inspected offer no indication of that, unlike the Cairo census, which identified a concubine as a 'slave wife' (see the chapter by Walz). However, concubines appear occasionally in the provincial court records. For example, in Ikhtab in 1848 Ahmad al-Atarbi presided over a household of fifty-seven including his extended kin, a handful of resident servants and several slaves. Fatima, one of the slave women, was mentioned twelve years later in Ahmad al-Atarbi's probate inventory as his *mustawlada* (one who bore him a child) and the mother of their daughter Nafisa. Fatima died some time before

her master. Had Nafisa not survived to become her father's heir, there would be no record of Fatima's role as a concubine.²⁴

In sum, the census registers suggest that, demographically, rural Egypt in the middle decades of the nineteenth century experienced significant change: growth in population and internal migration, such that diverse districts grew at different rates and some even lost population. Another development was the arrival of large numbers of enslaved Africans during the 1860s. In 1848 there were hardly any slaves at all in the four villages, but by 1868 African slaves accounted for over 5 percent of the four villages' population.

The Language of Slavery

When slaves appeared in the court records their legal status was always clear, since it had legal bearing. The village census registers were less precise in identifying the legal status of Africans. They were nearly always identified as *sudani* or *sudaniyya*, terms referring to their origin in 'the land of the blacks' (Bilad al-Sudan), the sub-Saharan region. Occasionally, also, the term *aswad/sawda* (black) was used.

Slave status was indicated in the census registers in more than one way. For example, slaves were unambiguously identified as slaves (*raqiq*) in the 1848 register of Ikhtab. The arrangement of the names within a household list was another indicator. First would come the name of the head of the household, followed by the free males (often but not always in order of age), identified by their relationship with the head ('his brother,' 'his son,' etc.), and then the male slaves. Then the females would be listed, the free women followed by the slaves.

In 1868 in the slave-holding households of Ikhtab, the names of the free males were followed by the names of men identified as *tabi'uh sudani*. *Tabi'* means 'follower,' 'subordinate,' or 'client.' Thus I would translate *tabi'uh sudani* as 'his [the head of the household's] follower/subordinate, a Sudanese' (the latter term referring to a region of origin, not a modern nationality). A comparison of the registers of 1848 and 1868 answers the question of whether such a 'follower' was a slave. In 1848 the slave (*raqiq*) Mursal, identified as thirty years old, was a member of Ahmad al-Atarbi's household. Allowing for some slippage in keeping track of his age, he was the same Mursal recorded as fifty-five years old in 1868 in the household of Ahmad al-Atarbi's son Muhammad, and identified as *tabi'uh sudani*, or Muhammad al-Atarbi's 'follower/subordinate, a Sudanese.'

The term *sudani* often signaled slave status, and Sudanese ‘followers’ were likely to be slaves. In the census register of Zafar from 1868, six members of the household of the *umda* Muhammad Ali al-Fandur were identified as *sudani tabi‘ub*, or ‘a Sudanese, his follower/subordinate,’ while in the summary data at the end of the register the term *raqiq* or slave was used as a category rather than *sudani*.²⁵ Similarly, in the register of Sandub in 1868, where Africans were referred to using the plural *sudan*, ‘blacks,’ in the summary data a distinction was made between the free males (*abrar*) and *sudan*.²⁶

The term *tabi‘* alone did not connote slave status. Jane Hathaway has noted that it connoted a relationship of *intisab*, or in other words a relationship of subordination and dependency with the person whose *tabi‘* one was.²⁷ A free man could be a *tabi‘*, as in the case of al-Hajj Ali, the *tabi‘* of Ahmad Efendi Hoja and a member of his household in Ikhtab in 1848, or Ahmad the cultivator (*fallab*), a *tabi‘* of Shaykh Muhammad Abu al-Amayim and a member of the latter’s household in Damas in 1868.²⁸ Occupations were never listed for slaves. A clear distinction also appeared in the household of al-Mitwalli Saqr, the *nazir* of the village of Salamun al-Qummash in 1848. Several members were unrelated male dependents, each identified as a *tabi‘*, followed by two male slaves (*raqiq*).²⁹ Nor, apparently, did the term *sudani* always connote slave status. For example, Abd Allah, a *sudani*, lived independently with his wife Khadija in Ikhtab in 1868. He undoubtedly was African, and his name was a typical one given slaves. Abd Allah al-Habashi (the Abyssinian), who was forty, lived independently in Damas with his wife and sister-in-law.³⁰ These men may have been manumitted.

Thus in these villages, where virtually all slaves were African, the association of African origin with slave status was sufficiently strong that the term *sudani* was often synonymous with ‘slave,’ and it can be understood as such when accompanied by other indications (position relative to other names in a household list, the term *tabi‘*, and so on). But the terms *tabi‘* and *sudani* by themselves do not mean the person was a slave. The meaning of these terms depended on the context in which they were used.

The most popular names given to African slaves in the sample data were, for the men, Sa‘id (‘lucky,’ ‘auspicious’), Abd Allah (‘servant of God’), and Faraj (‘joy’). The most popular names given to women were Fatima—the name of the Prophet’s daughter—and Za‘far (‘saffron’).

The latter may have been a reference (wishful or not) to the women's color.³¹ As Walz found in the Cairo court records, there were a number of stereotypical names given exclusively to African slaves: Faraj, Surur, Bakhit, Mursal, Mabruk, Farah, Bilal, and Farhan for men, and especially Za'faran for women.

The census registers also shed light on contemporary perceptions of color. Earlier in the century a system of identity cards was instituted for the purpose of monitoring and controlling internal movement. These documents were supposed to specify the bearer's "color, age and description."³² In 1868 the enumerators recorded similarly detailed descriptions of village men, and color was, again, one means of identifying and distinguishing individuals. The lighter colors white, blond (*ashqar*) and wheatlike (*qamhi*) were ascribed only to Egyptians and the darkest color, black, only to 'Sudanese.' Individuals in both groups were described as red and brown.

Walz found multiple colors ascribed to African slaves in the court records before the nineteenth century, though during that century the descriptions of Africans narrowed to black, brown and Habashi (Abyssinian) which also indicated a color.³³ Similarly, in the provincial court records I found slaves and freed slaves described either as white, Circassian, Abyssinian, brown, or black. Evidently the courts' usage reflected the evolution of a legal standard in describing the slaves' origin, color being an indicator of that. Ethnic groups were assumed to have particular characteristics, hence a slave's origin affected her or his price, and a buyer might sue if that origin were fraudulently misrepresented.³⁴

Table 3.2: Colors ascribed to Egyptian and 'Sudanese' men

Egyptians	'Sudanese'
White	
Blond	
Wheatlike	
Red	Red
Brown	Brown
	Black

Source: Census registers of 1868.

The census enumerators were unconcerned with such legal precision, and instead with identifying individuals. Thus they used a broader palette of colors that reflected contemporary usage.

Nineteenth-century foreign observers routinely classified slaves as white, black, or Abyssinian. Occasionally they distinguished the ethnicity of white slaves, but invariably they left out the category 'brown' for the Africans that remained in use in the court records. That their reports rarely hinted at the broader range of colors perceived in Egyptian society (and represented in the census registers)³⁵ suggests that Euro-American constructions of race provided a template for their discussions of slavery and race in Egypt, and that those sources cannot be regarded as mirror-like reflections of Egyptian attitudes.³⁶ Although it is not clear what it meant to some Egyptians to see themselves as within the same color range (red, brown) that they ascribed to some sub-Saharan Africans, their perception contrasted with the 'black–white' dichotomy in American culture. This is not to suggest that ethnic and color stereotypes were absent in the pre-colonial society; on the contrary. But evidence such as this sheds light on perceptions of color and ethnicity prior to the (re)construction of notions of 'race' in the colonial era.³⁷

The Slave-Owning Households

Slaves were costly, and slave ownership was a sign of status. Thus it is not surprising that most slaves in rural Egypt were in the households of village notables. The notables were the upper stratum in village society, distinguished from the majority by their wealth and status.³⁸ Notable families monopolized the positions of *umda* and village shaykh and tended to be the largest landholders within their village communities. A majority of the other slave-owning households was also engaged in agriculture.

The al-Atarbi family dominated the village of Ikhtab. In 1868 the *umda* Muhammad al-Atarbi and his three brothers Umar, al-Hajj Musa, and al-Hajj Ahmad together owned more than half of the slaves in the village. Every other household with more than two slaves was headed by a village shaykh. In Damas in 1868 no single family was as dominant, though the largest slave-owning household was that of the *umda* Ali Abu al-Majd. This village register reveals another pattern, namely that most slave-owning households were landholding households. Forty-one of the seventy-eight slave-owning households were headed by a man designated as a *fallab*. *Fallab* commonly means 'cultivator' or 'peasant'

but a comparison of the names in the census register with those in the corresponding land-tax register of Damas showed that in this context the term referred to a usufructuary landholder. That is, someone described as a *fallah* in the census was invariably inscribed in the corresponding land-tax register as responsible for the tax on a certain amount of land. In addition to the *fallah* households the six households headed by the *umda* and the village shaykhs were landholding households.³⁹

A similar pattern is observable in Sandub in 1868, where there were forty-four slave-owning households: five were headed by a village shaykh who was a landholder, and eighteen were headed by a man designated a *fallah*. Another six slave-owning households were headed by men designated in the census register as *shaghhal bi-l-aturiyya* [sic], or, in other words, a laborer or perhaps a tenant on the usufruct landholdings (*ath-ariyya*) of others. Evidently the supply of slaves in the 1860s was great enough that they were acquired by some households of modest means. In all, twenty-nine of the forty-four slave-owning households in Sandub were engaged in agriculture. In Zafar in 1868 each of the eleven slave-owning households held agricultural land. Two were headed by village shaykhs and the remainder by men designated as a *fallah*.

Marriage and Children

The sources used for this chapter do not reveal the interior lives of enslaved Africans, nor are their voices represented very often. They appear silently in the census registers and only occasionally in the court records. Nevertheless, these sources shed some light on the lives they lived.

It was a religious duty to see to the marriage of one's dependents, including slaves.⁴⁰ The census registers confirm that masters arranged the marriage of their slaves, though not as often nor as early in the lives of slaves as they did for dependent kin. In 1868, the most senior male slaves in the household of Muhammad al-Atarbi, the *umda* of Ikhtab, had been married. The previously mentioned Mursal, reportedly fifty-five, was married to Zaynab, forty. They had a twelve-year-old daughter and a one-year-old son. The fifty-two-year-old Rizq Allah and his wife Fatima, thirty, had a five-year-old daughter and two sons, aged three and one. Thirty-five-year-old Bakhit was married to Sitt Abuha, twenty. Faraj, thirty, had a ten-year-old son but no wife; presumably he was widowed or divorced. There was a similar pattern in the slave-owning households of his brothers: the more senior male slaves were

married, often with children, but in every case they remained within their master's household.

The age of marriage among slave men differed from that of the free males. The accompanying table correlates marital status and the reported age of slave and free men and women in the four villages. Although these data do not show the age at first marriage they are suggestive of it. Most women in their twenties were married, while most men were not married until they were in their thirties. Most slaves of both sexes tended to be married a decade later than their free counterparts. Thus while nearly three-quarters of all men were married in their thirties, a nearly similar proportion of slave men were not married until their forties. More than four-fifths of all women were married in their twenties, and about nine-tenths in their thirties, but fewer than half of the slave women in their thirties were married. Only around two-fifths of slaves of either sex age thirty or older were married. The majority of slaves were in their teens or twenties, reflecting the surging trade in the 1860s.

A small number of slaves were polygynous. In Ikhtab in 1868, in the household of al-Hajj Ahmad al-Atarbi (brother of the *umda*), the slave Abd Allah, who gave his age as sixty, was married to Awali (age unclear) and Husra, forty-five. The much younger Ibrahim, twenty-five, was married to Umm al-Izz, twenty, and Hijaziyya, thirty. Similarly, in the village of Damas, in the household of the *umda* Ibrahim Abu al-Majd, the slave

Table 3.3: Percent of all persons married and slaves married in the four villages in 1868, by age

Age	All Males	Slave Males	All Females	Slave Females
0–9	0	0	0	0
10–19	3	1	15	15
20–29	34	12	82	9
30–39	74	29	89	42
40–49	87	71	81	0
50–59	90	80	68	0
60+	82	100	28	0

Source: Census registers of 1868.

Mabruk, thirty-five, was married to Mubaraka, thirty, and Jamaliyya, thirty-three. Faraj, twenty-five, was married to Sa'ada, thirty-five, and Qadam Khayr, thirty.

Three of the Sunni schools of law allowed slave men to have up to two wives, while the Malikis permitted four.⁴¹ But there is no immediately apparent explanation for polygynous slaves. In most of the literature polygyny is associated with the upper and ruling classes, though in the four villages men of all social ranks were polygynous. In addition to identifiably wealthy men of status—shaykhs and *umdas*, landholders and large merchants—there was a small number of artisans and even an agricultural worker who were polygynous. Here the salient issue seems to be not why some slaves were polygynous, but why polygyny was practiced outside the upper and ruling classes.⁴²

The census sample also showed that slave men often were married to free women. In Sandub in 1868, in the household of Ali ibn Disuqi al-Saghir, Abd al-Aziz, the sole *sudani* slave, was the husband of al-Sayyida, who was also identified as a slave (*gariya*). However, in four other households the wives of slaves were not themselves slaves. The census register of Damas offers further evidence that *sudani* slaves were married to free women. In the household of the *umda* Ibrahim Abu al-Majd in 1868 the *sudani* slaves Mabruk and Faraj have already been mentioned as polygynous, and their wives were identified as *sudani* women. A third *sudani*, Bilal, was the husband of Umm al-Khayr, who was listed along with the free women and apart from the *sudani* women, even though Bilal's mother was listed with the latter. The care of the enumerators is indicated by the accounts of two subsequent households, in which the wives of *sudani* slaves are again identified as slaves. In three of the four villages, forty slave men were married, twenty-five of whom had free wives.

An unusual court case from al-Mansura provides further evidence of slave men marrying free women. In July 1857 Faraj, the slave of Sulayman Efendi al-Mallawani, a farmer in the village of al-Aziziyya, sued Mubaraka, daughter of the late Yusuf Abu Haraz of the same village. Faraj claimed to have negotiated a contract of marriage with Mubaraka three years earlier, when she was still a minor, with her cousin acting as her guardian, and with the permission of his master. He delayed paying the prompt dower, perhaps because the marriage could not be consummated until Mubaraka reached the age of majority. Later, after spending several months in a nearby village, Faraj returned to discover that

Mubaraka had in the meantime married another of her cousins. In her response Mubaraka acknowledged the first marriage contract, but she also presented a fatwa that invalidated it on three grounds: (1) a slave was not a suitable spouse for her; (2) betrothed by her cousin as a minor, she had the option of rejecting the marriage upon attaining the age of majority; and (3) the marriage was not consummated (and no dower had been paid), so Faraj had no complaint.⁴³

The first point referred to the requirement of status suitability, or *kafa'a*, in marriage. Legal handbooks of the era specified that a slave was an unsuitable marriage partner for a free person. However, men routinely married their social inferiors, including their manumitted slaves. In practice the rule of *kafa'a* was applied only to women, who were expected not to marry men of inferior status.⁴⁴ The second point referred to a rule in the Hanafi school of law, that is to say, that a woman betrothed as a minor by someone other than her father or paternal grandfather could object to it upon reaching the age of majority. Because the bride's silence was considered assent, she had to state her objection in order to invalidate the contract.⁴⁵

One can only imagine the complicated drama that went on outside of the court. We can only guess at what lay behind the bare facts recorded in this brief entry in the court register. Nevertheless it is apparent that, three years earlier, neither Faraj's master nor Mubaraka's guardian concerned themselves with the principle of *kafa'a*—that is, status equivalence or suitability—which was one of the criteria for a sound marriage in Islamic jurisprudence. That Mubaraka's guardian was a cousin indicates that she lacked a father, a grandfather, or an older brother, and that her marriage prospects were limited.

At the end of that year the court also heard testimony confirming that the woman Batta, the widow of a man identified as 'Farhan the slave' (Farhan *al-abd*), who resided in al-Mansura, was the legal guardian of her two minor children.⁴⁶ The question of the suitability of her marriage to her late husband was not at issue, nor would there have been any reason to raise it at that point, but it is evident that Batta, a free woman, had been married to a slave.

The numerical imbalance between male and female slaves in the villages was a factor favoring the marriage of slave men to free women in this period. In the four villages in 1868 the ratio of male to female slaves was three to one, and more importantly it was three to one for men in the

twenty to forty-nine age group—the years in which most men married. The issue of *kafa'a* or the suitability of slave husbands may have been eased by the status of the households to which they belonged. At least seventeen of the twenty-five slave men who were married to free women belonged to the households of notable families. Moreover, although a judge could invalidate a marriage for lack of suitability, he could do so only if a bride or her guardian brought the issue before him, as in the case of Mubarak. Couples did not yet have to register their nuptials in court, hence they were not required to prove that they were qualified to marry one another—that was the responsibility of their guardians. Finally, these marriages are evidence of the cultural value placed on marriage, and masters' sense of responsibility toward their slave dependents, even though they arranged for slaves to marry less often and later in life than free individuals.

The children of slave men and free women were born free. Thus four of twenty children fathered by slave men in Damas were free, as were thirty-one of thirty-three children of slave men in Ikhtab. No slave men in the other two villages had children. Relatively late marriage of slaves, the birth of free children to slave men and free women, and the birth of free children to masters and concubines indicates that 'breeding' was not a significant source of slaves.⁴⁷

Concubinage

Family systems in past times in many parts of the world accommodated a range of conjugal relationships, and, correspondingly, 'wives' of differing status. In medieval Europe, South Asia, and East Asia a man could acquire a 'legitimate,' 'principal,' or 'major' wife from a family of standing by following a formal and public procedure involving some combination of prenuptial negotiation between the families, a ceremony, a contract, and a dower or dowry, all of which entailed significant expenses for both families. Minor or secondary wives, concubines, and slave wives were acquired with fewer or no formalities, or by purchase. The latter unions were subject to fewer formal rules and the women in them had less standing and fewer rights than legitimate or principal wives.⁴⁸ Muslim societies recognized marriage, a contractual relationship between free individuals, and concubinage, a legal relationship between a man and a slave woman he owned. The children of such unions, if acknowledged, were free, and as heirs they were equal to the children born of contractual wives. A slave

who bore her master's child (*umm walad* or *mustawlada*) could not be sold thereafter, and if not manumitted during her master's lifetime she would become free upon his death.⁴⁹

The growth of the slave population in nineteenth-century Egypt implied an increase in concubinage. Edward Lane, who sojourned in Cairo in the 1820s and 1830s, wrote that some men "prefer the possession of an Abyssinian slave to the more expensive maintenance of a wife,"⁵⁰ and in the Cairo census Walz found otherwise unmarried men living with concubines or 'slave wives' (*zawjat jariya*). That term cannot be taken literally, for legally a man had to free his slave in order to marry her. The enumerators' choice of words probably reflected popular usage, indicating that these concubines were substitutes for wives. No *zawjat jariya* appeared in the four villages' census registers, though in Damas Ali Abu Hasan, a thirty-five year old mosque imam, lived with 'his wife' Halima, a *sudaniyya*.⁵¹ She was either manumitted and a contractual wife or a concubine. In Sandub, two agricultural workers lacking wives cohabited with twenty-year-old slave women, who probably substituted for contractual wives.⁵²

In addition to being an alternative to contractual marriage, concubinage was practiced along with it, as a form of polygyny. Here also, the rising slave population indicated an increase in polygyny, and that may explain the low rate of marriage among slave women noted earlier. In the four villages in 1868 there were seventy-six slave women in their teens, twenties, and thirties, only sixteen of whom were contractually married and thereby sexually unavailable to their masters. One can only speculate about how many of the sixty remaining women were concubines.

A sample of the registers of the Sharia court of first instance of al-Mansura and the provincial court of al-Daqahliyya showed that urban and rural notables alike enjoyed concubines. In twelve probate inventories between 1860 and 1885, a deceased urban notable was survived by a wife who was his freed slave, or by the children of a concubine.⁵³ Six of the fifteen women mentioned (some were plural consorts) were black or *sudaniyya*, five Abyssinian, and four white or Circassian. Two of the Abyssinians and one of the whites had been freed and married. Seven similar cases involving the heirs of rural notables appeared in the sample between 1859 and 1884.⁵⁴ Five of the nine women mentioned were black or *sudaniyya*, three were Abyssinians, and one Circassian. One of the Abyssinians was freed and married by her master before his death.

This sample is too small to allow more than a few observations. Concubines whose names appear in probate inventories represent an uncertain proportion of all concubines, perhaps even a minority of them. Those who bore no children or whose children predeceased their fathers would not be mentioned. The dates of these inventories indicate that slave ownership and concubinage was practiced by some of the rural notability at least a generation before the arrival of large numbers of slaves in the 1860s. The absence of cases after the mid 1880s may reflect the impact of the anti-slavery convention of 1877.

Every one of the rural notables found in the cases to have had a slave concubine belonged to an *umda* or shaykh family. Each, also, had multiple contractual wives (serially and concurrently), and so in their families concubinage appears to have been part of a polygynous style of conjugality. It is not clear how widespread that style was among the rural notables, nor how widely accepted it was socially. To judge from the court record sample, which admittedly is limited, concubinage does not appear to have been practiced throughout the notable stratum. Polygyny and concubinage were ways of building networks and alliances among elite families, displaying wealth and/or sexual prowess, and producing multiple offspring. However, the rural notables tended to marry well: they practiced group endogamy and also intermarried with other high status elements. Marriage to a woman from a family of equal or higher standing might prevent a man from taking additional wives or concubines.⁵⁵

Conclusion

This chapter presented a preliminary discussion of slavery in rural Egypt based on a limited sample of archival sources from the northeastern Delta. Further work will be necessary to determine the extent to which its conclusions can be generalized.

Significant numbers of slaves were present in the four villages studied only during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, owing to a conjuncture of increased supply and rural prosperity brought on by the cotton boom, which made slave ownership possible for some villagers. In the three villages that grew in population between 1848 and 1868, internal migrants were far more numerous than slaves, indicating that the surging trade in slaves was not simply a result of demand for agricultural labor. While the predominance of male slaves suggests that they were used in agriculture,

the extent to which the use of slave labor was preferable to wage labor or share cropping in agriculture cannot be determined at present.

In the villages, male slaves outnumbered female slaves by a ratio of about three to one, and presumably most were employed in agriculture. That ratio was reversed in the towns, where most of the slaves were female and employed as domestics. The contrasting sex ratios in the slave populations of the villages and the urban areas were related to different marital practices. In the villages some of the male slaves married free Egyptian women. In the towns some free men, including European residents, married or informally cohabited with 'slave wives,' who were less costly than free brides.

Unlike in America, slaves were not 'bred,' and in fact the slave population continually diminished through manumission and the birth of free children. Slaves did marry, but their masters permitted them to marry less often and at a later time in the slaves' lives than was the social norm. On the other hand, in both the urban and rural societies, the growing number of female slaves in the 1860s implied an increase in concubinage and in the rate of polygyny. Because of the sharp distinction drawn in the juridical literature and in popular culture between contractual marriage and concubinage, scholars have tended to overlook the fact that together, these two forms of conjugality comprised the family system. The provincial court records contain some evidence of concubinage among the rural as well as the urban notability, but perhaps a better indicator of its incidence is the relatively high proportion of unmarried adult slave women in the four villages.

Our sources also shed some light on mid-nineteenth-century perceptions of ethnicity and color, and their association with servitude. They suggest that while notions of 'race' were certainly not absent, they were not as rigidly hierarchical as some foreign travelers reported them to be. This has implications for the study of the formation of racial identities in the colonial and post-colonial periods.

Notes

Note: Some of the citations to court records herein refer to their former location in Dar al-Mahfuzat and the numbering system used there, namely *makbzan/ayn/raqm*. The final number refers to the volume number of the register. The provincial court records kept in Dar al-Mahfuzat were all moved to Dar al-Watha'iq about ten years ago.

- 1 On the African majority: Baer, “Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 419, and Fredriksen, *Slavery and Its Abolition*, 44. Africans were also the majority of slaves in the central Ottoman domains. For a useful discussion distinguishing between elite, *kul*/harem slaves and others employed in domestic and agricultural labor, see Toledano, “Ottoman Concepts of Slavery,” 42. Adequate sources for a history of African slaves and former slaves exist, as demonstrated by the chapters in this volume and also Walz, “Black Slavery in Egypt,” 137–60.
- 2 See, for example, Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 164ff.
- 3 Baer, “Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 421; Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 114–18, 121–23. The term privileged estate here refers to *jiflik*s (*ciftlik*s) and *ib’adiyyas*. See Cuno, *Pasha’s Peasants*, 160–65.
- 4 For an English version of the khedival decree pursuant to the convention see *The Times* (London), 1 April 1884; an Arabic version is in Sami, *Taqwim al-Nil*, 3, part 3: 1488–91. Earlier efforts to forbid the importation of African slaves during the 1850s were ineffective (Baer, “Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 430–31).
- 5 Baer, “Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 426; Fredriksen, *Slavery and Its Abolition*, 51–57; Austen, “Mediterranean Islamic Slave Trade,” 215–22.
- 6 Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*, 212–23; Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 54–58. A certain number of the slaves entering Egypt were destined for Istanbul.
- 7 Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 111–14; Baer, “Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 420.
- 8 Austen, “Mediterranean Islamic Slave Trade,” 219.
- 9 Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 111–13; Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 166.
- 10 Cuno, *Pasha’s Peasants*, 123, 141–46, 153–65. Helal found only a handful of cases of slaves being used in agriculture under Muhammad Ali, though at least some of them were “slaves of the *miri*” and may have been used on the privileged estates (*al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 111–14).
- 11 On the cotton boom era see Owen, *Middle East in the World Economy*, 126–27, 135–39.
- 12 McCarthy, “Nineteenth-Century Egyptian Population,” 1–39; Panzac, “Population of Egypt,” 11–32.
- 13 The three villages were Ikhtab (21 percent) and Damas and Sandub (both 18 percent). Zafar had no free migrants. I refer to heads of household since only their place of origin was noted. Including the members of their households would raise the percentages considerably.
- 14 Manumission was a meritorious act in God’s eyes, and various sources mention a customary period of service, usually less than ten years, after which a slave would be freed (although that was not required in Islamic law). The child of a slave woman and her master was free if acknowledged.

See Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 19, 52–54, 152–70; Brunschvig, “Abd,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Brill Online.

15 Egyptian National Archives (Dar al-Watha’iq al-Qawmiyya). Daftar ta’dad al-nufus bi-nahiyat Sandub min 20 Jumada al-Ula 1263 [April 1847], al-Daqahliyya, no. 7799; Daftar ta’dad al-nufus bi-nahiyat Sandub bi-qism Nawasa al-Ghayt bi-mudiriyyat al-Daqahliyya fi am 1285 [1868], no. 7803; Daftar ta’dad al-nufus bi-nahiyat Damas, 1264 [1848], no. 7759; Daftar ta’dad al-nufus bi-nahiyat Damas bi-qism Mit Ghazir 1286 [1868], no. 7761; Daftar ta’dad al-nufus bi-nahiyat Ikhtab, 1264 [1848], no. 7412; Daftar ta’dad al-nufus al-mawjud bi-nahiyat Ikhtab, 1285 [1868], no. 7413; Daftar ta’dad al-nufus bi-nahiyat Zafar bi-markaz al-Simbillawin 1264 [1848], no. 7773; Daftar ta’dad al-nufus bi-nahiyat Zafar bi-qism al-Simbillawin 1285 [1868], no. 7774.

16 See, for example, McCarthy, “Age, Family, and Migration,” 309–23.

17 Hollingsworth, *Historical Demography*, 29.

18 el-Shanawany, “National Life Tables for Egypt,” 224–25. The age deficits in the nineteenth-century data correlate neither with Muhammad Ali’s wars nor with epidemics.

19 Fredriksen, *Slavery and Its Abolition*, 53; and Baer, “Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 426.

20 Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 121.

21 Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 164–72; Baer, “Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 423.

22 Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 120–21.

23 Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 118–19. See also Baer, “Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 420.

24 Dar al-Watha’iq. Mahkamat al-Daqahliyya, Sijill Tarikat wa Aylulat 3:120–24, case no. 216.

25 Daftar ta’dad Zafar 1285: 37.

26 Daftar ta’dad Sandub, 1285: 19.

27 Hathaway, *Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt*, 21–24.

28 Daftar ta’dad Ikhtab, 1264: 26; Daftar ta’dad Damas, 1285: 3.

29 Dar al-Watha’iq. Daftar ta’dad al-nufus bi-nahiyat Salamun al-Qummash, 1264 [1848], no. 7776: 1.

30 Daftar ta’dad Ikhtab, 1285: 65; Daftar ta’dad Damas, 1285: 140.

31 See the discussion of names in Walz, “Black Slavery in Egypt,” 141–42.

32 Cuno and Reimer, “Census Registers,” 196, 198. The identity cards were issued to men only.

33 Walz, “Black Slavery in Egypt,” 140. On Habashi being a color, see Walz, *Trade between Egypt and Bilad as-Sudan*, 179. In 1980 in Kordofan I was told that the range of colors was understood to be red (Europeans and ‘Arabs’), yellow, brown, black, and blue.

34 See the case described by Walz, “Black Slavery in Egypt,” 140, n. 16.

35 For example, Lane, *Manners and Customs, Definitive 1860 Edition*, 133.

McCoan noted that, “Slaves in Egypt may be broadly divided into *white* and *black*, although the shades of colour between these two extremes are very numerous” (emphasis in the original), McCoan, *Egypt as It Is*, 318.

36 On this point see Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 170.

37 Recent work suggests that notions of race were profoundly influenced by colonial discourses. See, for example, Powell, “Brothers along the Nile,” 171–82; and Fluehr-Lobban, “Anthropological Review of Race,” 135–57.

38 On the village notables see Cuno, *Pasha’s Peasants*, 85–99, 166–78.

39 Dar al-Mahfuzat, Daftar mukallifat al-atyān bi-nahiyat Damas sanata 1286 [1868], 21/284/9480.

40 Brunschvig, “Abd.”

41 Brunschvig, “Abd.”

42 I addressed this point in “Demography, Household Formation, and Marriage,” 112.

43 Mahkamat al-Mansura al-Ibtida’i, murafa‘at 46/142/281:15. 24 Dhu al-Qa‘da 1273/16 July 1857.

44 See for example al-Dayrabi, *Ghayat al-maqṣud*, 52–53; also Linant de Bellefonds, “Kafa‘a,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. On the marriage of slave men to free women see also Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 181.

45 See al-Dayrabi, *Ghayat al-maqṣud*, 62. The courts in the nineteenth century applied Hanafi doctrine only. See Cuno, *Pasha’s Peasants*, 8; and Anderson, “Recent Developments,” 36, n. 2.

46 Mahkamat al-Mansura al-Ibtida’i, murafa‘at 46/142/281: 65. 26 Rabi‘ II 1274/14 December 1857.

47 Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 52.

48 Brundage, “Concubinage and Marriage,” 1–17; Sreenivas, *Wives, Widows, and Concubines*, 32; Loos, *Subject Siam*, 137–39.

49 Marmon, “Concubinage, Islamic,” 527–29; Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 181–86.

50 Lane, *Manners and Customs, Definitive 1860 Edition*, 133.

51 Daftar ta‘dad Damas, 1285: 48.

52 Daftar ta‘dad Sandub, 1285: 14, 15.

53 Mahkamat al-Mansura al-Ibtida’i, muba‘iyat 46/139/118: 126–28; 46/140/187: 8–9; tarikat 46/139/61: 46–57, 84–87; 46/139/119: 15–17, 19–25; 46/139/120: 1–2; Mahkamat al-Daqahliyya, Sijill Tarikat wa Aylulat 3: 84, no. 139; 3: 99–102, no. 175; 7: 13–14, no. 65; 20: 27–29, no. 8; 20: 29–30, no. 9.

54 Mahkamat al-Mansura al-Ibtida’i, muba‘iyat 46/139/121: 47–48; 46/140/183: 16–20. Mahkamat al-Daqahliyya, Sijill Tarikat wa Aylulat 3: 49–53, no. 85; 3: 91, no. 153; 3: 94, no. 163; 3: 120–24, no. 216; 4: 102–12, no. 158; 4: 147–48, no. 204; 22: 99–100, no. 40.

55 On the notables’ marriage choices see Cuno, *Pasha’s Peasants*, 88–89. On the connection between wives of status and monogamy see Cuno, “Ambiguous Modernization,” 256–57.

عشر اربعين مائة وعشرين ألفاً وسبعين ناعم اصوات
احتياج غليان صاحبها عاشر دام اجلاله عهداً ودر عصائر
النهر الدخان يصونك حتى دق ترجم عهداً ناعماً لزفاف

לְשָׁמֶן

قیمع ف دانی هر چه میله ط بید جمیلاج
حکم شوال ۱۳۷۱

مَنْفَعَةٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا هُمْ مُنْذَرُونَ

Fig. 1. A receipt dated 25 June 1822, registered in the Sharia court of Manfalut, Upper Egypt, showing a quantity of honey had been sent to the Pasha's mamluks in Aswan. DWQ, Mahkamat Manfalut, register 16, document 761, 5 Shawwal 1237/25 June 1822. By permission of the National Archives of Egypt.

وولکار خنایلو خلیل قادو لخنوم خود آلم افسنم عطا نام هنچهاری
عنایت ببوریزیت اصر ناصلزی واصل و مفهومی معلوم بینه لری بیلریت درکن کور دنیانند قاره دن خلفا پری و انجه
دو تقویله و رسه افتخرا اید و تضادی رضی زیاده او لور بیلریت بر دلو اسکانن پو قدر عنایت اید بی طرف دو لشادن
هنان عربی بیجی شلی بیاننده بر کاتب صدام او قور دو هر چه سفینه یه طریق تقدیز ده بر ادم که بود ایا ب و زهابنی گی
ایده رکن محل بینه نسلیم و کری طوره یه کلوده بینه لری بیز دن طور نیمه عجیل دی کونز رویت بیمه هیکاری دنی بلکونز دو روز
بعد طوریه و مصلونه بیم آدمیانه او توران امینه بر لر بار صایعه نسلیم بیدر اول و فی ادم نهاده دیمه سی و بید ادم کری
خودت اید راین و فی قیفه لر نوزیع اید و ب محل بینه کونز رویت بینه لری کارکرده بینه لری کیپک کونز رویت بینه اوزو
عبد کریم تلفن صیانن کونز بور افسنمه و شیخ

Fig. 2. Letter in Ottoman Turkish dated 18 November 1822, from Muhammad Bey al-Daftardar, the governor of Kordofan, to Muhammad Ali, explaining procedures he would take to keep slaves alive, saying that since sending slaves from Kordofan to Wadi Halfa via Dongola was very dangerous, he would send them from Kordofan directly to al-Turiyya. He asks for a commissary to receive the slaves from his envoy and to supervise boarding them on ships traveling from al-Turiyya to Aswan. DWQ, Bahr Barra, Box 8, document 89, 3 Rabi' I 1238/18 November 1822. By permission of the National Archives of Egypt.

三

فَيَقُولُونَ لَهُمْ كُلُّ مُنْكَرٍ دَارِكُمْ مَوْعِدُكُمْ مَهْدُوكُمْ	بِرْ صَدَرٍ فَجَاهِيْنَ نَاطِيْنَ	بِرْ صَدَرٍ فَجَاهِيْنَ نَاطِيْنَ	بِرْ صَدَرٍ فَجَاهِيْنَ نَاطِيْنَ
لَلَّاهُمَّ إِنَّمَا نَنْهَا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ فَنَهَا عَنْهُ فَلَا يَرَى			
فَإِنَّمَا نَهَا عَنْهُ فَلَا يَرَى			
فَإِنَّمَا نَهَا عَنْهُ فَلَا يَرَى			
فَإِنَّمَا نَهَا عَنْهُ فَلَا يَرَى			

Fig. 3. A detailed report submitted by al-Mu'allim Basiliyus to the Majlis al-Mashura in April 1830 providing data on the number of government-owned slaves who died in the period September 1821 through the end of August 1825. DWQ, al-Diwan al-Khidiwi (DK), register S2/40/14: 190, document 463, report from Majlis al-Mashura to DK, 3 Dhu al-Qa'da 1245/26 April 1830. By permission of the National Archives of Egypt.

اپنی نیتی عین مقتنی سعادتو بہ
جرا دیہ الحادہ او یخود را فری سبایکہ لدی مکملہ مولی عیسیٰ خصوصہ داڑھ صار او لائے ۲۵۰۰ ملک ناجیہ امریکہ جنہ تجھے خبر دیں فدا نہ
۲۵۰۰ ملک فی جو بنی اسرائیل مسلمانوں ایک دشمن زکر وظہ عیسیٰ روحہ صاریحہ نظور ایک کچھ صبری اولیہ فہ دنیا بیت د
ایکیاں بسیزہ بڑیہ خاکہ ایمیران آہنے آہنے تیریجا اسٹری نسبا ملھی ارادہ مفرغی بور کر کہ وہ ایک دشمنی بڑی نیتی جاہلہ
اویچو ۱۵۰۰ اچھیہ مبارت ایک دشمنی قیقا اسٹری ۲۵۰۰ ملک

Fig. 5. An order from Said Pasha in November 1854 to the Inspector General of Upper Egypt requesting the purchase of slaves for the army, with a price not to exceed 2,500 piasters per slave. DWQ, Taftish Umum Qibli, Box 1, document 236, 18 Safar 1271/10 November 1854. By permission of the National Archives of Egypt.

Fig. 4 (opposite). A letter from (Salim?) to His Highness (Muhammad Ali?) concerning the Tenth Brigade that arrived in a place called Auta (?) and the situation in Syria. He mentions in the last three lines of the letter that Ibrahim Pasha had arrived in Acre with 15,000 black slaves in his army. DWQ, Watha'iq al-Sham, Box 60, document 4, 28 Muhamarram 1251/26 May 1835. By permission of the National Archives of Egypt.

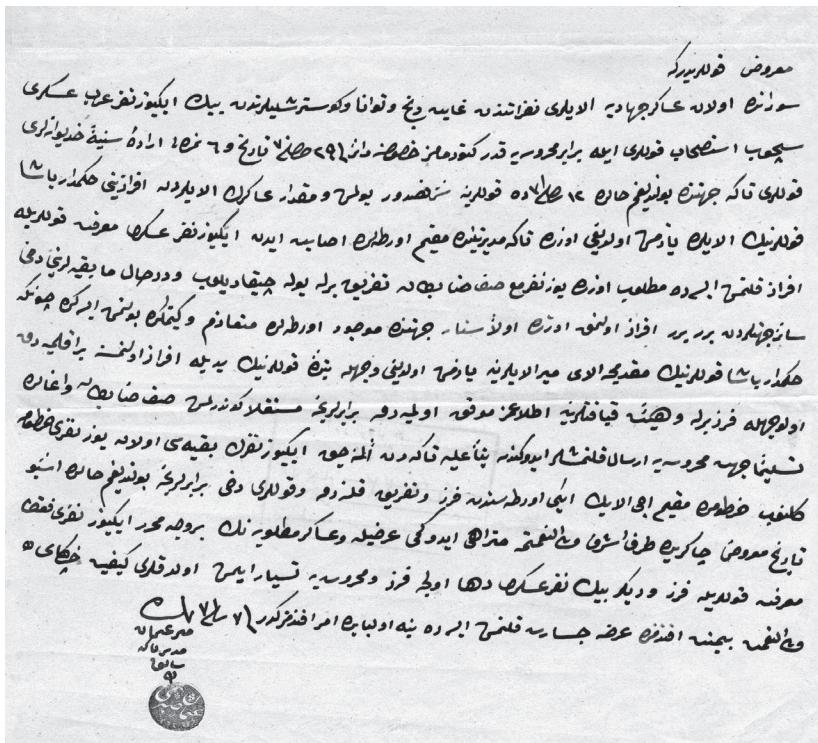


Fig. 6. Uthman Bey Sabri, the governor of Taka, explains in a letter to Said Pasha that he had selected 1,200 black slaves from those who served in the brigades of Sudan. He chose those who were strong of body and good looking to be sent to Egypt. DWQ, al-Ma'iyya al-Saniyya, Box 30, document 376, 7 Rabi' II 1271/28 December 1854. By permission of the National Archives of Egypt.



Fig. 7. "Slave Market of Cairo" by Robert Hay, 1830. Several western artists made drawings of Wakalat al-Jallaba, the black slave market of Cairo, the earliest being Robert Hay. From them it is difficult to know the layout of the market. However, all show a large central courtyard surrounded by storerooms and at least one story of rooms above. Robert Hay, *Illustrations of Cairo*, plate 25. Courtesy Rare Books and Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

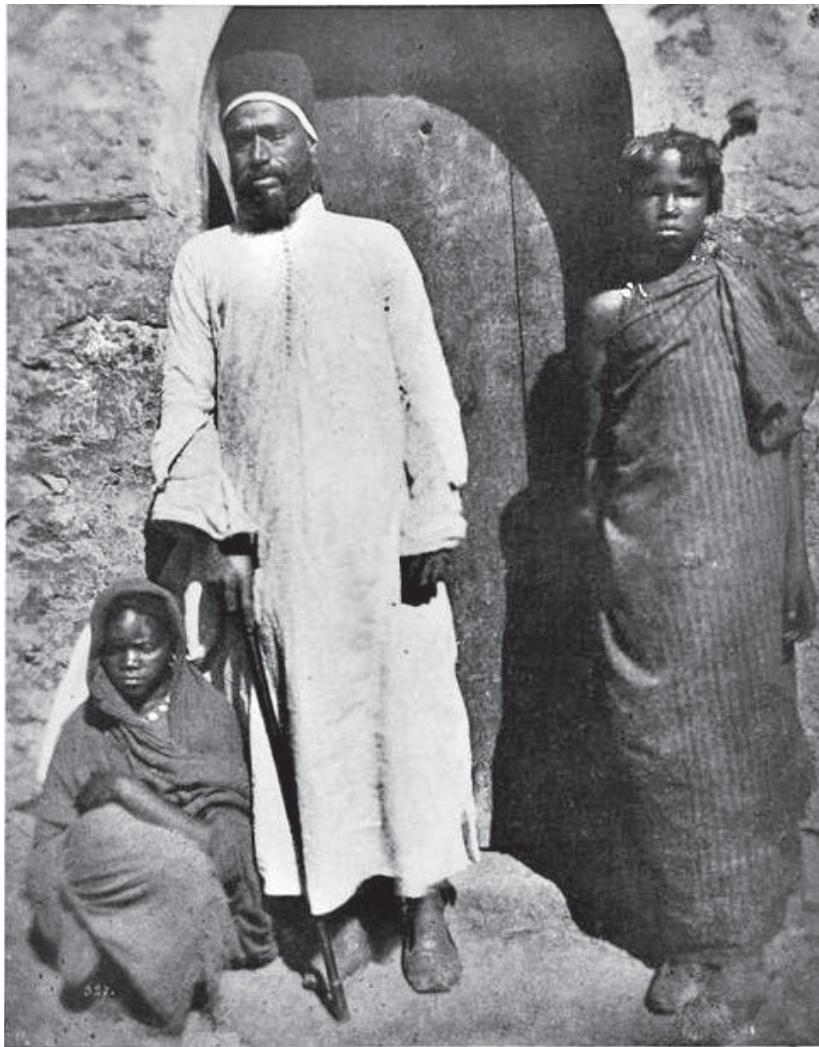


Fig. 8. "Abou Nabut and Negro Slaves in Cairo" by Ernest Benecke (1852). This photograph shows a slaver, most probably 'Barbari,' with two young women. He is wearing a fez and carrying a stick (*nabut*). Perhaps influenced by Orientalist painting, photographers often eroticized slave women. This picture seems less contrived. The women wear necklaces, perhaps made of cowries, and one wears an anklet. Clothing and jewelry given to slaves were their property according to custom. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource, N.Y. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, N.Y.

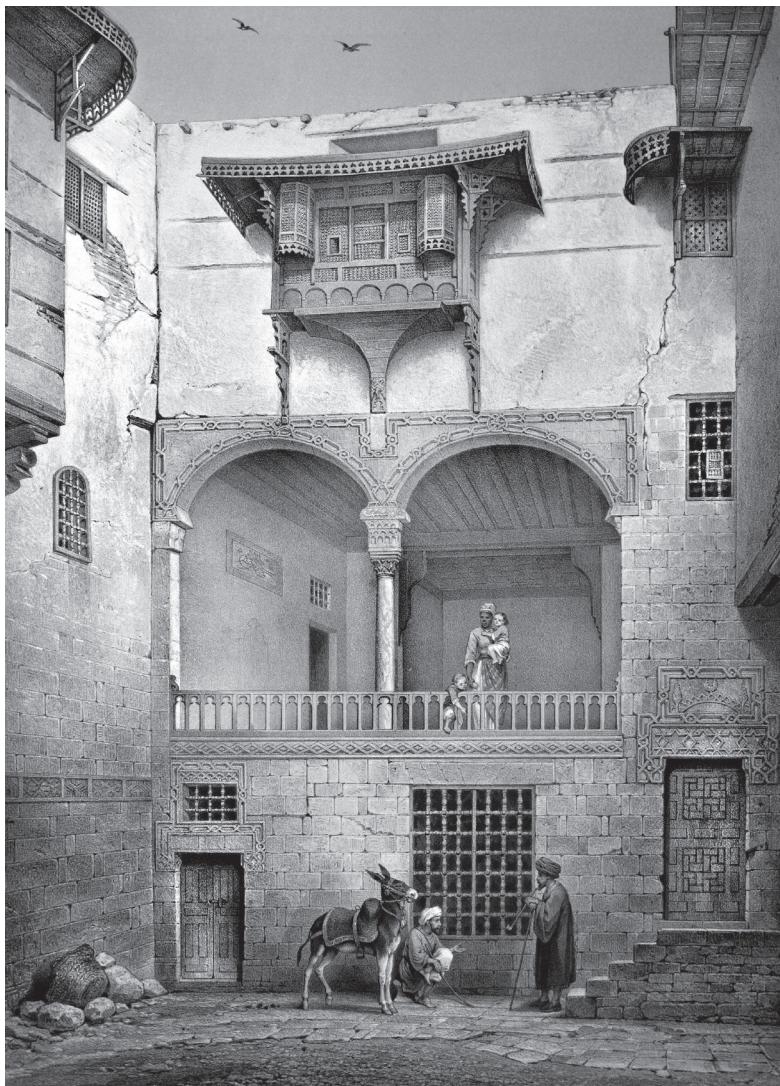


Fig. 9. "Maison appelée Beyt-El-Tchéléby: façade intérieure sur la cour (XVIIIe. siècle)." House called Bayt al-Shalabi in Cairo: interior façade on the court (18th century). African women often worked as nannies in upper-class households, such as the one Prisse d'Avennes captured in his drawing of the Bayt al-Shalabi. During his last trip to Egypt in 1858–60, he worked on the city's Islamic architecture. A.-C.-T. Emile Prisse d'Avennes, *L'Art arabe d'après les monuments du Kaire depuis le VIIe siècle jusqu'à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, vol. 1, plate 39. Courtesy Rare Books and Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

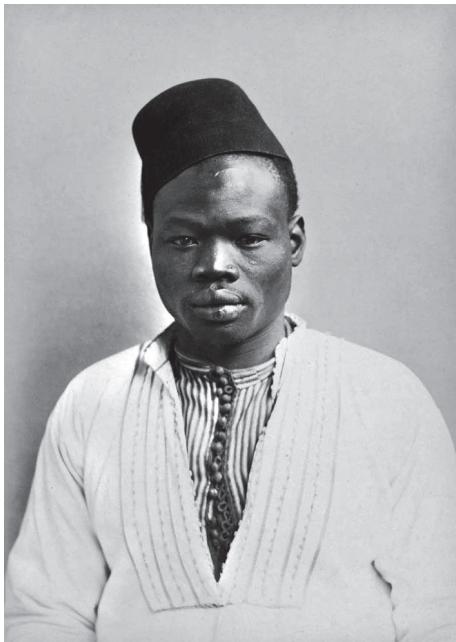


Fig. 10 (*left*). "Kadiga, 27 years, slave woman become free, born in the Sudan, wet-nurse to Ismail, son of Adila [and] Mohamed el Horra, 8 months, born in Cairo" (1889). This portrait and the one of Saïd Ghoueim (Fig. 11) are from a collection of 'anthropological' photographs made by [Prince] Roland Bonaparte during the Paris World's Fair of 1889. The fair's popular Rue du Caire featured two groups of musicians, one of which included several Sudanese. We know little of their backgrounds, but the notes to this photograph identify Khadija (Kadiga) as an emancipated slave. Société de Géographie, Paris. Collection de la Société de Géographie—Clichés B.N.F.

Fig. 11 (*right*). "Saïd Ghoueim, Negro, 24 years, born in the Sudan at Samar (Sinnar?), dancer, former soldier in the Egyptian militia" (1889). Many Sudanese slaves enrolled or were enrolled in the army once freed. Société de Géographie, Paris. Collection de la Société de Géographie—Clichés B.N.F.



Fig. 12. Children in the African quarter of Chania, Crete, with the Italian Barracks in the background (early twentieth-century). Ottoman troops were withdrawn from Crete in 1898, and replaced with detachments from Italy, Britain, France, and Russia, effectively ending Ottoman rule on the island. A report from the 1880s described the African quarter as having square, flat-roofed houses. These tents may have been improvised housing after the burning of the African quarter in 1901. From Papadakis, *Oι Αφρικανοί στην Κρήτη Χαλικούτες*, 78. By kind permission of the author.



Fig. 13. Salis Chelidonakis (1884–1967) (date uncertain). Chelidonakis was the last Afro-Cretan, one of a handful who evaded deportation to Turkey during the population exchange of the 1920s. Papadakis, *Oι Αφρικανοί στην Κρήτη Χαλικούτες*, 263. By kind permission of the author.



Fig. 14. "Femme turque avec son esclave" (late nineteenth–early twentieth century). Turkish woman with her slave. Postcard printed in Cairo. Like most images of ethnic 'types' in the era, this one was produced in a studio using hired models. Unlike her master, the slave woman does not have her face veiled. L'Egypte d'antan/Egypt in bygone days, www.egyptedantan.com. By kind permission of the website owner.

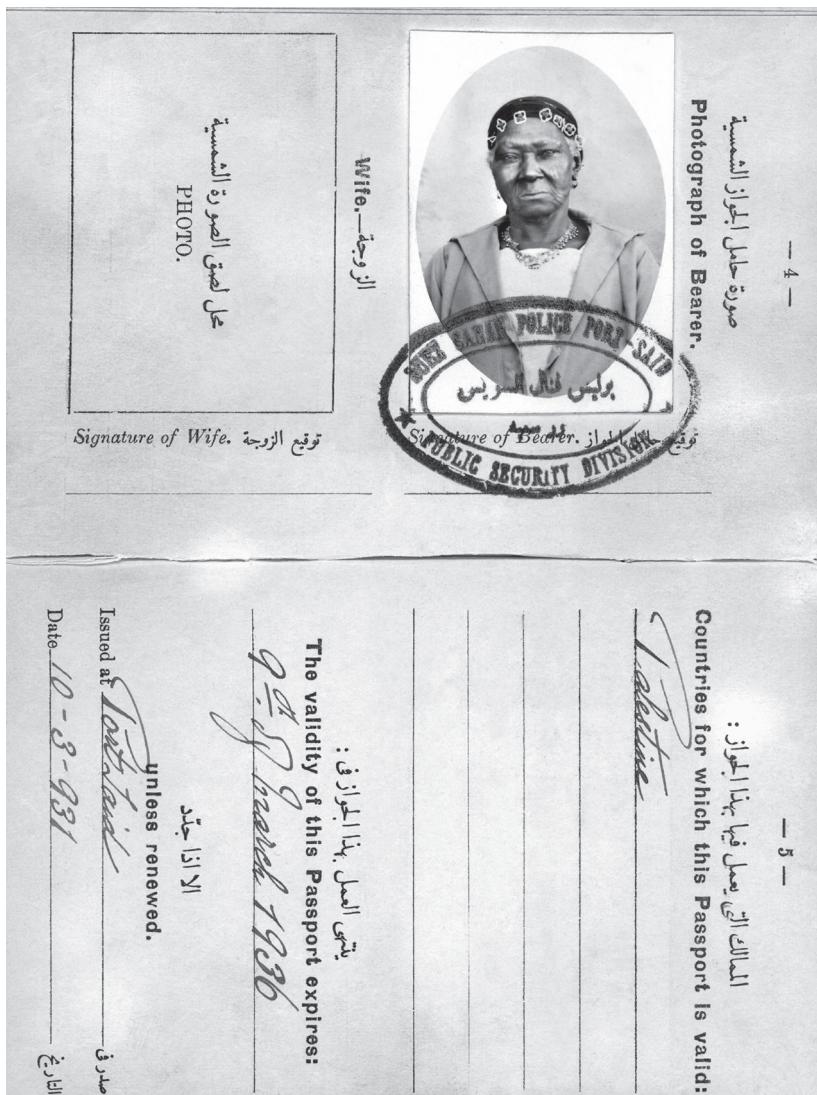


Fig. 15. Mariam Kilada Youssef (1935). Mariam Kilada Youssef was brought to Egypt from Darfur around 1878 despite the outlawing of the slave trade. She served and eventually was freed by the Kilada family of Sohag, who were Christian. She went on a pilgrimage with her adoptive family to Jerusalem in 1935, which required this passport photo. By kind permission of Dr. Shawki Nakhla, Cairo.

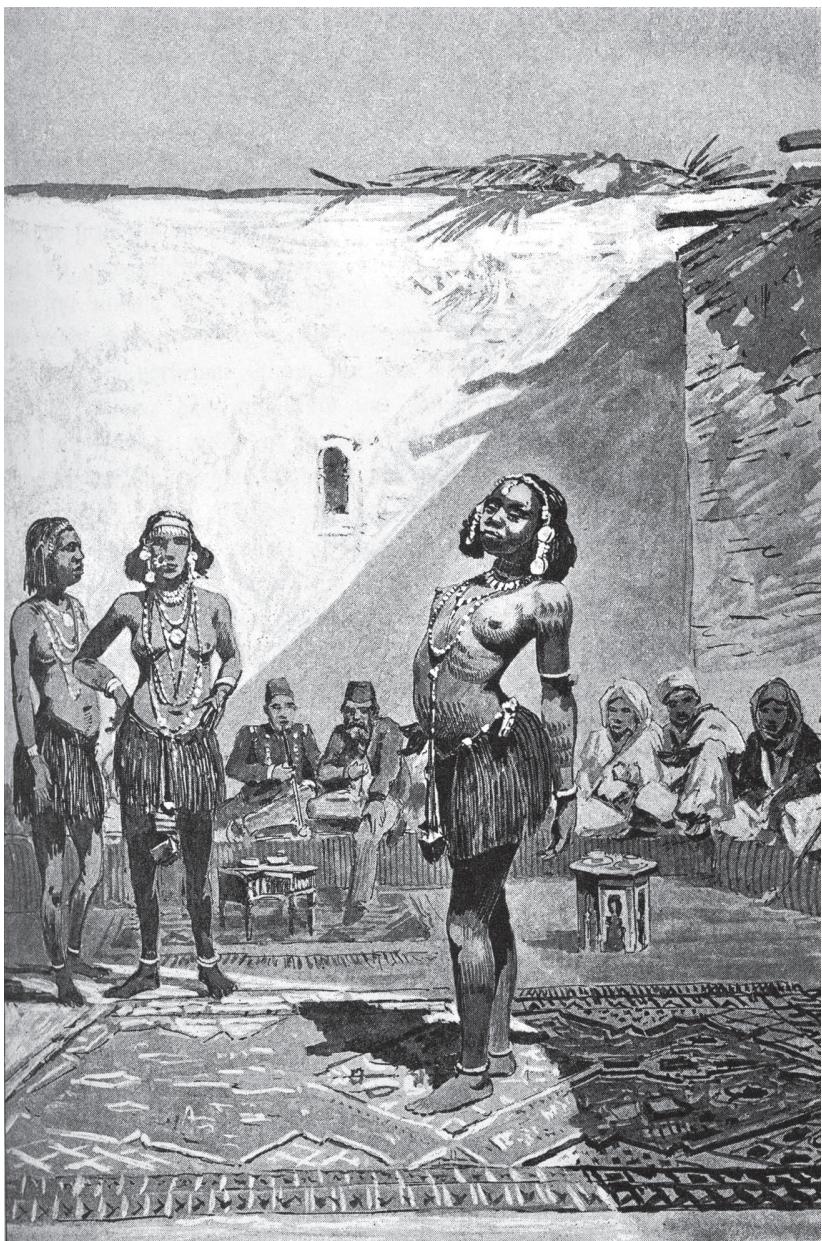




Fig. 17. Mrs. Crewe and Some of Her Freed Slaves in Cairo (1889). The British Anti-Slavery Society helped establish a home for freed slave women in Cairo in 1884 and appointed Mrs. Crewe as headmistress. Female slaves freed by the police or who fled their masters were often sent to Mrs. Crewe's Home where they were taught domestic arts such as sewing and cleaning, and elementary Arabic if they lacked it. *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, July–August 1889. By permission of Anti-Slavery International.

Fig. 16 (opposite). "Sudanese Dancers at an 'Azûmeh" (late nineteenth century). Sudanese and Abyssinian slave women regularly performed at dinner parties given by the Turkish, European, and Sudanese elite of Khartoum. The dancers are wearing *rahat*, short skirts of leather thongs. Junker, *Travels in Africa*, 181. Courtesy Rare Books and Special Collections, American University in Cairo Library.



Fig. 18. "Group of Male and Female Former Slaves" (1885). This group of liberated slaves in Cairo is carefully posed, the woman on the left appearing to hold a spear. Archives of Anti-Slavery International. By permission of Anti-Slavery International.

4

“My Ninth Master was a European”: Enslaved Blacks in European Households in Egypt, 1798–1848

George Michael La Rue

During the nineteenth century, many enslaved Africans lived in households headed by Europeans in Cairo and Alexandria. While detailed information from Egyptian households is scarce, portraits of African slaves are found in travelers' accounts, consular reports, biographies, and the collected letters of long-time European residents. The most personal of these sources reveal much about Europeans and the African slaves they encountered or owned. It makes sense to look at these writings as part of a broader attempt to understand the lives of enslaved and emancipated Africans in Egypt, while remaining alert to the potential similarities and differences in the slaves' experience in European and Egyptian households.

The Europeans who owned African slaves were generally Christians by culture, if not always by frequent church attendance. A few had converted to Islam. They were often diplomats, doctors, merchants, military officers, or employees of the Egyptian government. They were usually

richer than the average Egyptian, but not as rich as the richest Egyptians. The records they left include the experiences of Halima, the slave wife of Dr. Charles Dussap, a Frenchman who lived in Cairo;¹ the autobiography of Selim Aga, whose tenth master was Robert Thurburn, a British merchant and diplomat;² some details of the life of Catherine, the slave wife of Dr. Giovanni del Signore, an Italian physician in the employ of the Egyptian government;³ Edmond Combes' account of the life of Zenneb (Zaynab),⁴ the slave wife of the French pharmacist Saint-André;⁵ a brief account of the displacement of Arsana from the affections of Sulayman Bey, the French military officer and convert who helped create Muhammad Ali's *nizam al-jadid*;⁶ the brief biography of Ali, a young boy purchased in Wadi Halfa by Dr. William Holt Yates, a British traveler;⁷ the British writer Bayle St. John's description of the slaves of a Levantine household in Alexandria;⁸ and a brief but revealing footnote by George R. Gliddon, a British citizen who served as American consul, describing his family's household slaves from 1819–28.⁹

European writers were generally, and in some cases specifically, participants in broader, ongoing European constructions of race in this period. They discussed and based their actions on evolving notions about European interactions with 'the other,' and more specific concepts about Africans, about 'the Orient,' and about slavery, race, and gender.¹⁰

The period 1798 to 1848 witnessed large changes in the relationships between Europe and the Middle East and between Europe and Africa. Egypt experienced a significant change in power, modernized its economy and army, invaded and occupied the Sudan, and faced Ottoman and European attempts to control its destiny. Simultaneously, Europeans and especially the British and French debated and revised their views on the slave trade, slavery, and race. The British banned the trans-Atlantic slave trade in 1807, and passed the First and Second Emancipation Acts in 1833 and 1838. After briefly banning slavery during 1794–1802, the French outlawed slavery again in 1848.¹¹

European knowledge of slavery in Egypt and the trans-Saharan trade that supplied it also grew rapidly.¹² From 1838 the abolitionist movement began to focus on the Ottoman world, and specifically Egypt.¹³ The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1840, sent a letter to Muhammad Ali on the subject of slavery and the slave trade that same year.¹⁴ Thomas Fowell Buxton, a leading British abolitionist, included chapters in his influential books on the 'Mohammedan' slave

trade and provided information on slavery in Egypt and Sudan.¹⁵ The French abolitionist Victor Schoelcher, who led the campaign to abolish slavery in French domains, visited Egypt in 1845 to compare “Muslim slavery to Christian slavery” and wrote a book detailing his findings.¹⁶ These developments influenced European views and behavior toward slaves in Egypt and the Sudan. At the beginning of the century European slave ownership was commonplace, but by the middle of the century it was considered morally reprehensible. Some Europeans owned slaves in Egypt and the Sudan long after then, but their behavior was considered unacceptable by their European contemporaries. This change in European views was both caused and accompanied by a growing interest in slavery as a topic.

The challenge for modern readers of these texts is to strike an intelligent and sensitive balance between treating them as absolute and unbiased fact and dismissing them as useless fabrications. European writers refer to several standard positions on slavery and race, and compare the characters of the slaves they encounter to the submissive, difficult, passionate, or saintly stereotypes that they have created. They display a broad range of reactions to the slaves including disgust, dispassion, passion, and intimacy. Their comments include examples of deliberate distancing, gossip, analysis, bias, and clarity. These very personal and human sources are simultaneously challenging, fascinating, and revealing of the very real frictions encountered in master-slave relationships.¹⁷

As migrants to Egypt, European masters and African slaves alike acculturated to local views and practices. Examples of that include the domestic arrangements some European men made with slaves, such as Dussap with Halima, Saint-André with Zenneb, and del Signore with Catherine.¹⁸ These relationships tended to be monogamous, long-term and stable, like ordinary marriages, with the women managing households, cooking, and if necessary, child-rearing. Yet in none of these cases did the master free his slave woman or formalize the relationship. The practice of taking a slave wife has counterparts in other cross-cultural and colonial situations, and similar domestic arrangements were made by Egyptian men with African slave women.¹⁹ Such women were actually called ‘slave wives’ (*zawjat jariya*) in the 1848 Egyptian census.²⁰

Most Europeans who reported on African slaves were male, but two notable exceptions were Suzanne Voilquin and Ida Saint Elme. The working-class Saint-Simonian Voilquin and the high-society Saint Elme

each elicited interesting, detailed, and intimate information from their male and female sources about the lives of African slaves in European households. What they learned is discussed throughout this chapter.²¹ Anonymous Italian nuns also preserved precious information on the trans-Saharan journey of Fadlcarim (Fadl Karim, discussed below) and other slave girls.²²

From the sources used here, one can learn not only who the European slave-owners were, why they bought slaves and what shaped their interactions with them, but also about the slaves' lives before capture, their experiences of slavery before entering a European household, their daily lives and interactions, their attempts at acculturation and assimilation, and their paths out of the households.

Before Entering European Households

Enslaved Africans experienced the trauma of unexpected and forced removal from their original homes. Whether kidnapped and spirited away to serve a neighboring ethnic group, marched to another sub-Saharan kingdom, or taken by an invading army across the desert, they were deprived of the security of home and family, and found themselves in an unfamiliar and often harsh world. Many slaves were captured in the Turco-Egyptian invasion of the Sudan in 1820 and in subsequent slave raids. Many of the men were taken for the Egyptian army, and the women and children were sold as domestic slaves.²³

There was commonly a loss of life at each stage of the process. Some were killed during the moment of capture; others died from wounds, beatings, dehydration, or from injuries caused by the fetters they were forced to wear on the march from the point of capture to their captors' camp. Once there, their captors evaluated, sorted, and distributed the newly enslaved people as rewards for the raiders, for ransoming by their relatives, or for exchange. Their captors kept some slaves, and merchants from several commercial networks in the regional and trans-Saharan trades bought others. Those purchased generally moved toward the larger markets that required more labor and could outbid local demand for slaves.

Many of these captured Africans moved across the Sahara from the Sudan or Abyssinia to Egypt. They generally walked, while other trade goods were carried by camel, and the merchants walked or rode. Some particularly valuable slaves were permitted to ride on camels or donkeys.

Later, to reduce slave mortality, slave merchants and the Egyptian government moved slaves on Nile boats for a portion of the journey northward. As in the Atlantic slave trade, death was a constant companion, with shortages of water and diseases giving the trans-Saharan crossing its particular horrors.²⁴

The stories of the slaves who ended up in European households reflect the broader experiences of enslavement, treatment in transit, and domestic servitude. Selim was tending his father's goats in Kordofan when he was kidnapped. Two young girls were tricked by a guest in their home in Kordofan and sold repeatedly until purchased by a European in Cairo. Fadlcarim was at home with her family when it was attacked by a band of armed men.²⁵ Zenneb's story is more complicated:

[S]he was from one of the princely families of Darfour, and supported her pretensions with a show of grand airs. Made prisoner by the troops of the viceroy [Muhammad Ali], she was taken to Egypt where M. Saint-André had purchased her in the slave market.²⁶

She was probably captured in Kordofan, then a province of the Darfur sultanate. Similarly, Almas was captured in a raid by Egyptian forces in the Nuba Mountains:

[T]he pasha's troops made the attack during the night, whilst the negroes were sleeping; . . . they fired repeatedly upon the district with cannon and muskets, both loaded with shot; and . . . they burnt the straw huts of the negroes. As they escaped from their burning huts they were seized by the troops: many, especially the children were burnt to death, and many were killed. Those who ran away, and were pursued by the soldiers defended themselves with stones, spears and trombashes; the latter, an iron weapon in common use among the natives of these mountains.

The negroes retreated to the caves in the sides of the mountains, from whence they were eventually obliged to come forth, from fear of suffocation from the fires made at the entrances, or from want of food and water. . . . Pronged stakes were fastened round the throats of the men, and their hands were fixed in blocks of wood nailed together. Boys, of twelve or fourteen years, had their hands only manacled, and the young children and women were without any incumbrance. He cannot say how many were killed in the attack; he thinks 500 were taken along with him

from Kongo, but many of these died of thirst, hunger, and fatigue, on their march to Kordofan. Almas's father and brother were captured along with him, and the former was compelled to wear the pronged stick from Gebel Noobah to Kordofan. They are both soldiers at Sobeyet [El Obeid]. His mother was seized by the sultan of Baggarah, who makes expeditions continually against the inhabitants of Gebel Noobah.²⁷

Some Muslims were wrongfully enslaved, through haste, oversight, or indifference. A few of these later had recourse to courts in Egypt or North Africa to plead their cases.²⁸

Shaping Expectations of Slavery

In Darfur, Sinnar, Kordofan, and Abyssinia the institution of slavery was part of the local culture. Monarchs, lesser officials, merchants, nomads, and wealthy landowners had slaves. Local people knew that captives could be forced to work for their captors, and some of the slave-holding class, like Zenneb, were captured and sold into slavery themselves. Adults were aware of the Muslim precepts on the proper treatment of slaves and of the prohibition of enslaving Muslims.²⁹ But compared to this general and vicarious knowledge of slavery, firsthand experience was to prove much more vivid.

In 1817, John Lewis Burckhardt, the noted traveler, wrote that enslaved Africans were traded multiple times between the point of capture and their sale in Egypt:

Few slaves are imported into Egypt, without changing masters several times, before they are finally settled in a family; for instance, those from Fertit are first collected on the border of that country by petty merchants who deal in Dhourra [grain]. These sell them to the traders of Kobbe [Kubayh] who repair to Fertit in small caravans for that purpose. At [Kubayh] they are bought up by the Darfour, or Kordofan dealers, who carry them to Shendy. . . . At Shendy the slave is bought by some Egyptian or Ababde. Upon his arrival in Upper Egypt he is disposed of either at Esne, Siout or Cairo. In the first two places, entire lots of slaves are taken by merchants, who sell them in retail at Cairo, or in the small towns of Upper Egypt, in each of which they stop for a few days, in their way down the river.³⁰

The enslaved learned more about their new status along the way. They were grouped together by the slave merchants, hurried along the

desolate desert routes, sometimes herded into boats, fed and watered as needed, but at low cost. The merchants were concerned about security, speed, the slaves' health, and, of course, profits.

Slaves had different values according to gender, age, place of origin, and skills.³¹ But certain aspects of their value and marketability could be enhanced en route: language skills, presentability, religious faith, and perceived place of origin. There was also the question of market timing. How and when could they be sold for the most money? For children, this could mean simply aging or 'seasoning,' while teaching them Arabic, some basic household tasks, and manners suitable for a future Egyptian household.

An example of seasoning can be seen in the biography of Selim, who ended up in the household of Robert Thurburn. Selim was captured in Kordofan and taken to El Obeid along with Medina, a young girl:

My time while with the first three masters was employed doing nothing. The Turkish gentleman found work for every body; and all the testimony I can bear to his good character is, that he was one of the cruellest men in existence. . . . My office was what might be called a general house-servant. The duties of waiting the table, washing dishes, making coffee, and waiting for orders, were allotted to me as my share of the work. Medina was made assistant cook for a short time, but I had the disagreeable misfortune to see her sold to another Turk; thus I was left to suffer alone.³²

Selim stayed in that Turkish household for six months, and then was sold to merchants headed for Dongola. A spice merchant bought him, and in addition to his household duties, he assisted in the shop. He reen- countered Medina, now with only her fifth master, while he was with his seventh. His ninth master was a European, more than a year after his initial capture. Selim was shaped by both his owners and the other slaves he encountered, all of whom informed his understanding of what it meant to be a slave in each of the situations and locations he passed through. Zenneb also had several owners before becoming the slave wife of Saint-André, a French pharmacist who worked for the Egyptian army.³³

At times new masters in Sudan and Egypt used violence to control and train the new slaves. Some simply wanted slaves for their labor, and aimed to work them hard and minimize their upkeep. Not all members of the household shared the same plans: a Sudanese merchant, for

example, might want to season a young slave girl as she matured sexually, acquired a basic knowledge of Arabic, learned household duties, and acculturated to Muslim society. But his wife might see her as a nuisance and object to training her, viewing her instead as a potential rival in the household. Fadlcarim, a six-year-old girl from Kordofan, was purchased by a merchant who intended to season her by putting her in the care of his wife. She was worked hard, forced to grind grain with a hand-mill (a task usually reserved for adolescent or grown women), and poorly fed. When she secretly ate some roasted meat, the wife caught her and whipped her until she fainted and collapsed. A few days later the wife struck her in the chest with such force that she “vomited a large amount of blood.” The merchant, fearing for her health and resale value, quickly sold her, and she was eventually brought to Egypt.³⁴

African slaves hoped they would find a permanent position in a respectable household, which was preferable to adjusting to the ways of a new household during a brief period of seasoning, then being resold and traveling to face new uncertainties. Even more daunting was the possibility of facing Egyptian society alone, without means of returning home and no one to help them in this new place. Thus for some slave women who bore children to their masters, and might therefore have expected to be treated as *umm walads* in accordance with Sharia law, remaining a favored slave who could not be turned out of the household might be preferable to becoming a legal wife who could be divorced.³⁵ A loyal slave would expect to be manumitted after a time and established in a secure position. Young women expected to be settled with a respectable husband, and young males might hope to be set up in a trade or another secure post. African slaves in Egypt were ‘veterans in slavery’ with histories, fears, and hopes before they were ever sold to European masters.³⁶

Pre-conceptions about Europeans

En route the slaves learned about the societies that they passed through, and what they might face in Egypt’s cities. Selim, who had stopped off in El Obeid and Dongola, expressed his apprehension at being sold to a European:

My ninth master was a European gentleman, of the name of P[iozzin].³⁷ With Mr. P[iozzin] I only lived a fortnight, when I was dispatched (under charge of a Turk) down to Alexandria. The next master into whose hands I fell was R[obert] T[hurburn], Esq., British Consul in Egypt.³⁸ Having

fallen into the hands of a British gentleman, I now thought that I was lost, having heard so many Mahomedan prejudices against Christians.³⁹

What had Selim and other slaves heard?

Fear was one of the tools that slave dealers used to control slaves. They instilled fear of direct physical punishment, of abandonment during the trans-Saharan journey, or of being dumped overboard from the boats transporting them along the Nile.⁴⁰ Their successive owners also instilled fear in them of those they would meet at the next stage of their journey.

Local Sudanese captors frightened their slaves by suggesting what their future Egyptian or Turkish owners might do to them, and Egyptian merchants often depicted the Christian Europeans as monsters. For example, Muhammad al-Tunisi, the Tunisian traveler and translator at the Egyptian Medical School, stated that people in Darfur would tell their slaves that Arabs from outside their country were short of meat, and bought slaves to eat their flesh, to use their brains to make soap, and their blood to dye cloth red.⁴¹ Ignatius Pallme, a Bohemian merchant in the Sudan, noted that slaves in Kordofan were told “all the captives who fall into the hands of white men are fattened in their country for slaughter.”⁴² Similarly, members of the Nile boat crew told Ali, the young slave boy purchased by William Holt Yates, a British doctor traveling in Egypt, that he would be eaten by the doctor and the crew.⁴³

Dr. del Signore, another employee of the Egyptian Medical Service, purchased his slave wife Catherine, a ‘Nubian’ girl, when she was about twelve years old. Delivered to his house in Cairo, she stood in a room nervously awaiting his return:

By chance, someone brought a demijohn of wine, and a servant poured out a glass. Catherine saw all this through a glass partition and told herself: “It’s really true that the Europeans drink blood; when my master comes I will be killed and eaten.” The master returned and Catherine, thinking she had no right to defend herself but trembling and chilled, surprised her master greatly when she asked him, “So you’re not going to eat me?” and she devoted herself to M. del Signore in proportion to the fright that she had had.⁴⁴

Such fears might have prevented slaves from running away from Sudanese or Egyptian masters to Europeans.

Entering European Households

Europeans acquired slaves as loot or pay for service in an army, through purchase in a slave market or from slave dealers, as gifts, through inheritance, or by receiving runaways.

Prior to the arrival of Napoleon and his army in 1798, the European community in Egypt was already well established and presumably served by servants and African slaves. The Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras saw changes in the makeup of that community, and a renewed interest in describing local practices. The French were divided between those who were ready to take advantage of the local institution of slavery for their own purposes and those who favored the revolutionary ideas of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* that inspired the Jacobins to reject slavery and slave ownership.

Jean-Pierre Doguereau, an artillery officer in the Armée d’Orient, reported on the soldiers’ efforts to find female companionship, and gave instances of some who gained access to the harems of grandes who had fled Cairo. “[A] harem, into which two of our colleagues knew how to introduce themselves and from which they brought out Black women, provided a way of passing some moments in those first days.” Then he added, “One quickly became bored with them.”⁴⁵ Doguereau knew of the sub-Saharan kingdoms from which black slaves came. He commented on the nudity of the slaves in the market, their decorative scars, and the women’s nose jewelry. Slave prices ranged from forty to one hundred fifty piasters according to their “age, beauty, and strength; the youngest are eight or nine.”⁴⁶

For some it was simply pragmatic to acquire a slave or two, in order to be free to do their own work, or to gain a competent assistant. For example, in 1799 the French biologist Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire acquired two slaves:

For two hundred and fifty francs, I purchased an eleven-year-old child [Tendelti] who I set to care for my collections and to stuff animals. Since then, I was given an old negro woman who is very good for household chores.⁴⁷

Tendelti’s name suggests that he may have come from Darfur. Keeping slaves while traveling around was difficult for Saint-Hilaire, so he placed his female slave in an Egyptian notable’s harem while he was away.

The quartermaster François Bernoyer was a Jacobin, but even he considered buying a slave, and visited Cairo's slave market with a colleague. He refused to buy ordinary Sudanese women whom he described as wearing grass skirts (perhaps a misperception of their leather-fringed *rababs*) and "smelling bad." A merchant then took him upstairs to see higher priced women. There, Bernoyer found a very beautiful African woman. But the asking price was 1,800 francs, and his lower offer was turned down. Later, he discovered that Eugène de Beauharnais, the young stepson of Napoleon, had purchased her.⁴⁸

Despite his radical sympathies and interest in the trans-Saharan slave trade, Doguereau succumbed to the idea that female slaves were mere objects of lust. He argued that slavery in the Orient was very different from that in the West: "The slavery of blacks is a very happy estate in Egypt. Women are bought to keep women company or to busy themselves with housework." The males are "the shop boys in the boutiques and often become the adoptive children of their masters; they are only bought by wealthy persons."⁴⁹ Saint-Hilaire too found few similarities between slavery in Egypt and on the plantations of the Atlantic seaboard: "Slavery here is different here than in America. It is a true adoption. My two slaves never call me anything other than their father, and I so value their services that I pledge them the same friendship."⁵⁰ This sentiment, shared by some later Europeans, became a pillar of the Orientalist view of slavery in Egypt.⁵¹ Yet other Europeans saw slaves as suffering humans, separated by force from their own families and cultures.⁵²

Once in Egypt, Napoleon tolerated local slavery, and even sought control of the African slaves of the Mamluks, ordering that all the male slaves (black and white) of the Mamluks should be collected and enrolled in the army.⁵³ After losing many men to plague during the Syrian campaign, Napoleon wrote to the sultan of Darfur: "I beg you to send me by the first caravan 2000 black slaves over sixteen years of age, strong and vigorous; I will buy them on my account."⁵⁴ Back in France, Napoleon was clearly not an abolitionist, and at best pragmatic and tolerant of local practices even if they predated 1789.⁵⁵

After the French forces departed, Muhammad Ali Pasha soon began to recruit Europeans as technicians, engineers, military, and medical officers. These new European employees began to set up residences in Egypt and needed household help. In 1828, the Russian consul Nesselrode explained how this led to the purchase of slaves:

The difficulty in getting domestic help which is adapted to the climate, and which knows the local languages and customs, has forced the Franks to round out their household staffs by buying blacks of both sexes coming from the caravans of Sennar and Dar Fur, who from time immemorial have been sold to Muslims at Asyut, Cairo and even Alexandria.⁵⁶

In the 1820s African slaves were relatively abundant in Egypt due to the invasion of the Sudan. During the Greek War of Independence (1821–28), several regiments of Muhammad Ali's *nizam al-jadid* army, including thousands of Sudanese slave soldiers, were sent to Morea in the Greek Peloponnese.⁵⁷ There Ottoman forces were taking Greek captives, ransoming some and enslaving others who were distributed in Egypt and elsewhere in the Empire. In Egypt, Europeans both took advantage of this new source of slaves and purchased and liberated Greeks to remove them from Egyptian or Turkish hands. After 1828, Greeks were no longer readily available, so Europeans had to choose from among enslaved Africans from Abyssinia, Darfur, Kordofan, Sinnar, the Upper Nile (including Dinka and Nuer), or the Oromo areas of the Horn of Africa.

A major plague epidemic struck Egypt in 1834–35, killing a substantial portion of the general population, among whom one observer estimated were 15,000 African slaves.⁵⁸ Laverne Kuhnke cites the figure of 34,600 total deaths in Cairo between April and June, although she provides no breakdown by ethnicity, nationality, or gender.⁵⁹ Hamont, a French contemporary observer, suggests a similar total based on 'official records' and reports that a count of the dead bodies removed from Cairo included 6,150 Negroes and 830 Nubians.⁶⁰ De Lesseps, French consul in Alexandria at the time, suggested that official plague statistics often undercounted some groups, including blacks.⁶¹ Although not every black person in Cairo was a slave, a great majority of them were.

Africans in the Cairo slave market were hit particularly hard. "Before the epidemic, there were more than five hundred in the bazaar; there remained of them eighteen."⁶² Merchants hesitated to buy slaves until the epidemic passed, as did individual buyers: "During the time of the plague, no one buys slaves."⁶³ The repercussions of such decisions must have been felt all along the caravan routes, as the situation in Egypt became clear.

Lesser plague and cholera epidemics continued annually through 1844. Although determining the full demographic impact of these epidemics remains a challenge to scholars, it is clear that the high mortality

suffered by African slaves in 1835 and succeeding years led to a boom in slave imports during 1838–40, which in turn drew increased attention from European abolitionists who brought fresh pressure to bear on the Egyptian government.⁶⁴

The methods by which Europeans acquired slaves did not change. European officers in the Egyptian army may have obtained slaves as part of their pay, as other soldiers did. More commonly, Europeans bought slaves in the major markets in Cairo, Alexandria, Tanta, and elsewhere, or from merchants along the trade routes from Sudan to Egyptian towns. Visiting the slave market was a common experience for Europeans, frequently described in the travel literature.⁶⁵ Several of the slaves discussed here were purchased in the Cairo slave market. Halima was purchased by Dr. Dussap, Zenneb by Saint-André, and Selim by Piozzin. To purchase young Ali, Dr. Yates visited a merchant's compound in Wadi Halfa. Another option, perhaps more common for elite women, including Europeans, was to ask a merchant to bring a dozen or so slaves to a private home for their consideration.⁶⁶

Some Europeans received slaves as gifts—Saint-Hilaire, for example. Thomas Legh, a British member of parliament who traveled up the Nile, was presented with a ten-year-old boy by an official in Nubia in 1813. He took him to England, and later passed him on to Reverend Charles Smelt.⁶⁷ The French surgeon in Muhammad Ali's service, A.B. Clot, known as Clot Bey, gave a slave to Dr. Etienne Pariset, who was investigating the causes of the plague.⁶⁸ Richard Lepsius, the Egyptologist, received a young Abyssinian from Sultana Nasra near Wad Madani in Sudan in 1844.⁶⁹

Europeans even inherited slaves from their parents. Arif was a teenager when his mother Halima died in 1834. After his father Dussap and sister Hanim died of the plague in 1835, he surely inherited their possessions, including the surviving slaves of the household.⁷⁰ Other Europeans who died in Egypt must have similarly left estates that included slaves to their children.

Europeans also received runaway slaves. In 1828, a consular source explored this issue: “[I]n Egypt, it is a very small portion of blacks who fall, exceptionally, into the hands of Europeans, in only the last fifty years.”⁷¹ Despite the growing abolitionist sentiment in Europe, the diplomatic corps was reluctant to advocate for abolition: “My colleagues, moreover, would hesitate to intervene in practices which are a part of the

local laws, and which procures for the Europeans established in Egypt advantages essential in their private lives.”⁷²

There was a reciprocal practice of returning slaves who ran away from European households to ‘Turkish’ ones, and vice versa. The most common reasons for running away were bad treatment or “the hot-headedness to which these creatures are subject.”⁷³ The government routinely obliged runaways to return to owners.⁷⁴ If a slave fled from one European household to another—most commonly as the result of a seduction—it was a more complicated matter, as the Capitulations prevented Egyptian officials from intervening, and the matter fell under the jurisdiction of the respective European consuls. In 1828, a Russian merchant, Paul Hambar, complained that a slave “of the Turkish religion,” who served as wet-nurse and nanny to his children for nearly six years, had been taken from his residence by Annibal Lappi, a twenty-two-year old assistant dragoman in the Austrian Consulate General.⁷⁵ Lappi refused to return her, stating that she had just entered his service and was free because as an Austrian subject and employee of the consulate he could not own slaves. The Consul General of Austria, Joseph Acerbi, who was known to have black slaves serving in his household, supported Lappi, causing an unpleasant diplomatic impasse.⁷⁶

Life in European Households

In 1844 the visiting Gerard de Nerval was advised that the best way to live cheaply in Cairo was to rent outside the European quarter, but generally single European men were not permitted to do so.⁷⁷ One way to overcome this barrier and to get domestic help was to buy a slave woman:

“But slaves are much cheaper [than wives], my dragoman has advised me to buy a female slave and to establish her in my domicile.” That’s one idea. “Would I be within the limits of the law?” “Perfectly.”

The conversation continued on the subject. I was a bit astonished at the ease with which Christians could acquire slaves in Turkish lands; they explained to me that it was only thus for slaves who were more or less colored, but one could have nearly white Abyssinian women. Most of the [European] merchants in Cairo had some. Clot-Bey was raising some to become midwives. Another proof they gave me that this right was not contested, was that a black slave woman who had recently escaped from the house of M. Lubbert had been brought back to him by the police.⁷⁸

Newly arrived Europeans were often helpless without servants, slaves, or dragomen who could negotiate their way through the local culture. Europeans of a certain status did no household work, and they often turned the shopping, running of errands, delivering messages, cooking, cleaning, laundering, and general housekeeping over to slaves, as in the larger households of Dussap and Gliddon. Smaller households might follow the pattern adopted by Bayle St. John's informant of retaining one faithful slave for decades, while replacing the second slave every year or two to balance continuity with infusions of fresh energy.⁷⁹

From what our sources indicate, single European men often sought cheaper housing outside the European quarter, possibly sexual adventure and a cook, without giving too much in return. In such households African slave women might be either transient sexual companions or long-term slave wives. These households often consisted of only a European man and a slave woman, who typically had sexual relations with the man and kept house. Sometimes there were additional male servants. Some Europeans developed an attachment to their slave women and their relationships developed into long-term alliances and even informal marriages that produced children. Dussap saw his slave wife Halima as a welcome relief from his affairs with European women. Like del Signore, he did not seem to mind that European women gossiped about men who lived with African slave women.⁸⁰

Some European men were resigned to or even thrilled at the prospect of paternity, while others were quick to dispose of their pregnant slave women.⁸¹ Clot Bey lamented the practice of some European men of selling "women they have made pregnant and thus abandon[ing] to slavery their own children from whose eventual births they do not blush to exact a profit."⁸² A few Europeans kept several slave women at the same time, while others had a succession of sexual relationships with African or other slave women.

Some of the most enduring bonds were between European medical men and African slave women. Dr. Dussap purchased Halima in about 1818, and they stayed together until her death in 1834, producing two children, Hanim and Arif. Dr. del Signore had a relationship of many years with his slave wife, Catherine. Saint-André and Zenneb were together at least eight years as man and wife, until she left him and married his Nubian servant, Musa.⁸³

Most of the slaves owned by Europeans were Africans. During the Greek War of Independence, Europeans including Lane and the Gliddon household had owned Greek slaves.⁸⁴ But European sympathy for the Greek cause and shock at the enslavement of European women led Egyptians and others to keep them out of sight.

Male slaves in European households were comparatively rare and are generally not well described. They appear to have had duties similar to those of male slaves in Egyptian households, and were often taken to Europe, unlike female slaves.⁸⁵

European attitudes toward and expectations of their African slaves varied according to their own social and marital status, and their broader views on slavery. Conservatives were more tolerant of slavery and more hierarchical in their attitude toward slaves. Radicals either opposed slavery entirely or were more egalitarian in their treatment of slaves. The French serving under Napoleon or hired by Muhammad Ali, such as Clot, Sulayman Pasha, and the pharmacist Saint-André, tended to tolerate slavery and owned slaves, without forming permanent emotional attachments to them. But those who were more egalitarian in their political views, such as the Saint-Simonians, Dussap, Perron, and the French physician and explorer Alfred Peney either refused to own slaves or treated them as their equals.

Among Anglophones, the division was similar, with merchants and diplomats owning slaves until the British abolitionist movement had gained considerable clout, as seen in the households of Gliddon and Thurburn. The severest Anglophone critics of slavery in Egypt included the radical John Bowring and the Irish doctor Richard Robert Madden, both leading abolitionists.⁸⁶ Pseudo-scientific views also played a role: Gliddon, an amateur Egyptologist with an interest in craniology, eventually relegated Africans to an inferior status and defended slavery, but Dr. Yates, a devotee of phrenology, hoped to prove that it was nurture rather than nature that degraded Africans.⁸⁷

Married Europeans seem to have treated African slaves much as they did their servants back in Europe. They felt a paternalistic responsibility toward their social inferiors, and an obligation to oversee their moral behavior. They worried about the morals of female slaves, and feared the adolescence of their young male slaves. This explains the practice of purchasing young male slaves, then apprenticing them out before they reached sexual maturity.⁸⁸

Dussap's household was unusual. Although his wife Halima was an African slave, he maintained quite a large staff, including an older female slave who worked as a cook, her husband who served as *bawwab*, a manservant, two young Abyssinian women for unspecified household duties, and one or two other slave women, perhaps for other menial tasks. By contrast, the Gliddon household had a staff of only one or two slaves for much of the period from 1819 to 1828.⁸⁹

Paths out of European Households

Just as African slaves entered European households in Egypt in various ways, so too they found diverse paths out of them. This is best seen in the Gliddon household in Alexandria: between 1819 and 1827, they had eight African slaves (seven females and one male) and a Greek female servant named Pasquala who had arrived in Egypt as a slave and had been bought 'out of compassion' from 'Turkish' soldiers in the bazaar. Gliddon himself bought two others in 1832 and sent them home.⁹⁰ Their stories will be intermingled with those of others.

Emancipation was not a simple affair. European tourists frequently visited the slave market of Cairo, until it was closed in 1843, or saw slaves in boats headed down the Nile to markets in Cairo and Lower Egypt. They were often moved to purchase individual slaves to free them without considering the difficulties of post-emancipation life. In 1819 in Daraw (Upper Egypt), for example, Frederick Henniker, a British traveler, purchased a slave woman from a recently arrived caravan from Darfur. Then he followed her to the Nile boat to convey what he thought was good news:

[M]y first object was to inform the girl, that she was no longer a slave; she burst into tears; and when I told her that I would send her back to her own country, she redoubled her sorrow. All the sufferings that she had undergone in traversing the desert presented themselves before her, and she told me that she had rather die than go back, and "if you give me what you call liberty, you will throw me adrift upon the world, and who will take care of me; there will be nobody obliged to support me, and what shall I do?"

Here she renewed her lamentations so earnestly, that I promised her she should remain a slave.⁹¹

A French artist's slave boy of nine or ten had a similar reaction when, shortly after his purchase, he was presented with his manumission papers: "My father, do I not belong to you? Where am I to go if you abandon me? Let me follow you and do all I can to serve you. I am your slave—do not forsake me." When he was later seen by British travelers, he had been taught to read and write, having worked in the artist's small household for three years.⁹²

Slaves who accompanied their masters to Europe were commonly emancipated. One interesting example was the Abyssinian boy Clot gave to Dr. Pariset in 1828. Joseph-Theodore Rihan became Pariset's godchild. Mme. Pariset raised him in Paris, teaching him to read, write, and giving him 'notions of history.' Rihan became a French citizen, and married in 1839.⁹³ Less happy was the case of Ali, who was purchased by Dr. Yates, freed as a condition of his departure from Egypt, and sent to school in England, only to die of whooping cough.⁹⁴

Marrying out was a possibility for slaves in certain European households, which blended the European pattern of the paternalistic treatment of domestic servants with the best behavior of upper class Egyptians and Ottomans toward their servants. As Henniker explained, "generally after a few years' servitude, a husband and portion are given to the well conducted."⁹⁵

All seven African slave women in the Gliddon household were freed and married within a year or two of their arrival there. The first, Fatima, "a reddish-black Galla-girl [Oromo], rivaling the Venus de Medicis in form and strikingly in face," purchased in 1819, was "freed and married out in 1821, dying shortly after of the plague." Fatima and Seyda, "Dar-foor negresses" purchased in 1822, were "emancipated, dowried and married out in 1823," because Gliddon's mother was leaving for England to put three of her children in school, reducing the need for domestic help. Of the next four "negro girls" purchased after his mother's return to Alexandria in 1825, three were freed and married off by June 1827, and the fourth, Barbara, in July.⁹⁶

This practice was not restricted to the Anglophone community. About 1826, Treusy Soler, the Spanish consul general, wished to free and marry off three African slave women who had served in his household, but the Ottoman tribunal refused to sanction this act without a written manumission document, signed and sealed by the consul, and translated into Arabic.⁹⁷ Neither the selection process nor the husbands selected are described in these sources. But in Fadlcarim's account, her Turkish

master in Istanbul awarded her as a wife to a young soldier who had done him favors and was about to leave on a foreign assignment. Once he saw how young and puny she was, the soldier rejected her.⁹⁸

For some male slaves enlistment was a way out of domestic service. The Gliddons' only male slave was "a fine negro boy named Murgian [Murjan]," perhaps twelve or thirteen at the time of his purchase in 1822. Considerable attention was paid to Murgian's upbringing, for he was "taught reading and writing, baptized and vaccinated." The goal may have been to show him off or to prepare him for life as a freeman and servant in England, as Selim became in the Thurburn household in Scotland. Murgian acquired basic literacy (presumably in English), was converted to his masters' religion, and was protected against smallpox, one of the biggest killers of slaves at the time. But then, Murgian

underwent, at the age of puberty, that constitutional change from intelligence and gentleness to stupid ferocity which, in Egypt, prevents everybody, but Turkish officials who possess soldiery, from keeping adult negro male slaves in households. Murgian abjured Christ and turned Muslim, became too restive for mild control,—and finally (1824), becoming infatuated with a Nizām-jezeèd [nizam al-jadid] regiment of negroes about to embark for the war in the Morea, my father gave him his liberty. He sailed and, like his comrades, never came back.⁹⁹

This establishes the timing of Murgian's exit from the Gliddon household, and that he rejected his master's plan to acculturate him to European standards. One can ask whether this represents a broader pattern of young African male slaves becoming 'difficult to handle' at puberty. In European eyes this may have been a fear that could ruin their efforts to 'improve' their young charges. Alternatively, young male slaves as they aged became increasingly aware of their situations, and began to make their own choices when possible. In Alexandria, Murgian must have encountered soldiers of the *nizam al-jadid*, the new military regiments filled with Sudanese slaves. To his eyes, their lives as soldiers and their camaraderie could have seemed an attractive alternative to his relatively isolated life at the Gliddons'. He was allowed to join them, and died in Greece.

Still other African slaves left European households as gifts, sales, or transfers. Dr. Clot gave Rihan to Pariset. A nine-year-old 'Nubian' slave boy, spotted by Major Thomas Skinner en route from Marseilles

to Alexandria in late 1832, reported being captured as a child of three or four while traveling with his mother and sister. The children were taken to Cairo and sold. Eventually, a Greek bought the boy and sent him to his brother in Marseilles who owned the ship conveying Skinner to Egypt. After staying in France about six months and learning some French, the boy was being returned to Egypt because of “bad behavior.”¹⁰⁰

Europeans sold slaves they perceived as troublesome, no longer wanted as sexual partners, unnecessary in a downsized household, or not suitable to take with them when they left the country. One can evaluate these explanations as matter-of-fact narratives, as self-serving fabrications, or as ‘social constructions’ of racial stereotypes. One melodramatic example that is subject to these considerations involves an African slave woman displaced from her master’s affections by a Greek slave. Sulayman Bey accompanied the newly trained Sudanese *nizam* troops to Greece in 1824, taking with him “a negress of rare beauty” named Arsana who remained his favorite until he acquired three Greek women for his harem. Soon, stormy scenes broke out between Chrisoula, the new favorite, barely eighteen and seductively beautiful, and Arsana. According to a French visitor, matters reached a crisis just two days before his visit to Sulayman Bey. Arsana had burst into Sulayman’s room to find Chrisoula in his arms:

This sight brought her fury to a boil. “Unfaithful,” she cried, “it’s too much to enjoy your triumph and my shame.” Then she threw herself violently on her rival and propelled by a blind rage, she grabbed her hair, scratched her face, and was going to put out her eyes but she was stopped by [Sulayman]. Furious, he turned her over to his men and gave the order to execute her before his eyes.

On hearing this, Arsana was far from submissive: “No,” she said, “no, [Sulayman] you have not condemned me, you don’t want my death. Arsana is too dear to you, you can’t be thirsty for her blood. And still forgetting our mutual love, ungrateful you want to sacrifice me to my rival. I die without regret, because death will deliver me from the hateful sight of you. . . .” She showered Chrisoula with curses as [Sulayman] repeated his fatal order. Unintimidated by that, Arsana was swept away by her fury and she breathed curses against all who surrounded her.¹⁰¹

When other French military instructors arrived, Arsana’s life was spared but she was asked to leave Sulayman Bey’s house and never

return. This melodramatic scene may not have been unique. There are other reports of jealousy and murder involving African slave women in European and Turco-Egyptian households.¹⁰²

Conclusion

Due to the richness of biographical, epistolary, narrative, medical, and legal sources detailing the European presence in Egypt in the first half of the nineteenth century, it is possible to catch more than glimpses of the many Africans who served in European households. In some cases such as those explored in detail here, historians can consider the fuller biographies of specific enslaved Africans in their domestic urban contexts. From them, we may re-establish the patterns not only of their individual lives—from capture through their service in Egypt—but also the parallel experiences of other enslaved Africans.

All of the African slaves who reached Egypt had earlier biographies in specific societies in Bilad al-Sudan. They were individuals who had been removed from their families by force and made to travel long distances under harsh conditions. They witnessed the deaths, in the desert crossing or from disease, of many of their fellow slaves. Like Selim, they endured life under several masters along the way, and were told frightening stories about how they would be treated by Egyptians, Turks, or Europeans at journey's end.

Once in Egypt and forced into new Egyptian, Turkish, or European households, slaves were treated similarly with certain moral and legal standards held up as ideals, but their very human masters sometimes fell short of those ideals, out of greed or lack of empathy, or because they too had expectations and fears of what slaves might do. Even in European sources, one can still sense that enslaved Africans did not simply yield to their masters' plans, but that they created their lives to the extent that they could: surviving first, and then making the best choices available to them—to get along, to leave, to join the army, to make a scene if they had been mistreated, and even to tell their stories when they found sympathetic listeners.

The expectations and fears of Europeans were part of the broader project of their social construction of the 'Orient' and of race and slavery. The period from 1798 to 1848 was full of historical events and movements that increased European interest in Egypt and the Ottoman world and transformed European attitudes about race and slavery. European views about enslaved Africans were neither inert nor monolithic in this period,

as local practices, pragmatism, and idealism all played a role in shaping the actions of individuals. By 1848, Europeans, and particularly the British and French, generally disapproved of their colleagues owning slaves.

In the future scholars may discover sources that provide details of the lives of African slaves within Egyptian households. But at present, it is necessary to turn to European sources for insight into the experiences of slavery from the moment of enslavement to the slaves' purchase by households within Egypt. Whether their lives were significantly different under European and Egyptian masters remains to be discovered as new sources are found.

Notes

- 1 La Rue, "African Slave Women," 168–89; Voilquin, *Souvenirs* (1978); and Moussa, *Le Voyage en Égypte*, 831, citing Voilquin, *Souvenirs* (1866): chapter 26. This material is *not* in the 1978 edition.
- 2 Selim Aga, "Incidents"; McCarthy, *Selim Aga*.
- 3 The details of Catherine's life are given in Saint-Elme, *La Contemporaine en Égypte*, 3: 34–35. Del Signore is described as "Doctor of Medicine and Surgery, Laureate, at Pavia in 1811 and at Bologna in 1813, Inspector-General of the Sanitary service in the Egyptian Army, in the first years of its organization; afterwards Chief Physician of the armies of the Morea and Syria, and now Medical Inspector, Member of the General Board of Health" in Foreign Office, Great Britain, *Correspondence relative to the contagion of plague and the quarantine regulations of foreign countries, 1836–1843* (London: Harrison, 1843): 526. For other details, Balboni, *Gli Italiani nella civiltà egiziana*, 1: 173.
- 4 This chapter keeps the spelling of names as they appeared in the sources; where we think it necessary, we will put the transliterated names in parentheses for clarification.—Eds.
- 5 Combes, *Voyage en Égypte*.
- 6 Deval, *Deux années à Constantinople et en Morée*, 210–11.
- 7 Yates, *Modern History*, 2: 475–76. I have examined this case in detail: La Rue, "Brief Life of 'Ali," 71–87.
- 8 St. John, *Two Years in a Levantine Family*, 48–52.
- 9 Nott, et al., *Indigenous Races of the Earth*, 531–32.
- 10 See Said, *Orientalism*. A useful summary of the changing attitudes of Europeans toward Africa and slavery can be found in Manning, *Slavery and African Life*, 149–67. See also Hunwick, "Same but Different," ix–xiv.
- 11 Manning, *Slavery and African Life*, 149–67. On French abolitionism see Dorigny, *Abolitions of Slavery*.
- 12 Walz, *Trade Between Egypt and Bilad as-Sudan*, 223–30.

13 Ali, *The British, the Slave Trade and Slavery*, 7–19.

14 Madden, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali*, 110–11, 127.

15 Buxton, *African Slave Trade*, 37–47; and his *African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, 48–57.

16 Schoelcher, *L'Egypte en 1845*, 111–22.

17 This topic is also addressed in Erdem's chapter in this work. Mark Reinhardt would have historians avoid 'acts of ventriloquism'; see his "Who Speaks for Margaret Garner?" 81–119. Similar concerns can be found in Powell, "Silence of the Slaves," xxv–xxxvii. Other historians such as Ehud Toledano suggest that we must occasionally speculate to fill holes "by resorting to *knowable* and *verifiable* social and cultural context, bridging gaps by carefully allowing a *measured* use of the *educated imagination* that for the historian, brings to life people and communities long gone" (emphasis in original). He calls this "voice recovery." Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 34–35. A very thoughtful and thought-provoking example of this approach in the context of American slavery is Annette Gordon-Reed's argument, after scouring the historical record for details of the relationship between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, that imagination is still required to make sense of the facts and the missing pieces: "History is to a great degree an imaginative enterprise: when writing it or reading it, we try to see the subjects in their time and space. Imagining requires some starting point of connection." She advocates seeing the Hemingses "in a way that they were not thought of during their lives . . . as fully formed persons with innate worth and equal humanity that links them directly to us all, no matter what our race." Gordon-Reed, *Hemingses of Monticello*, 31–32. For an outstanding example of the use of a rich knowledge of the context of slavery in a specific time and place to explicate the relatively few words of slave women's own mediated narratives see Marcia Wright, *Strategies of Slaves and Women: Life Stories from East/Central Africa* (New York: Lilian Barber Press, 1993).

18 These two couples are discussed, respectively, in La Rue, "African Slave Women in Egypt" and the "Zennab," paper.

19 An insightful study of gender relations in a colonial context is: Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*.

20 On slave wives see the chapters in this volume by Cuno and Walz.

21 Biographies of Saint-Elme and Voilquin are in Moussa, *Le Voyage en Égypte*, 1031, 1041–42.

22 Calixte de la Providence, *Les Fleurs du désert*. Another female writer cited herein is Lucinda Darby Griffith, wife of a British army officer stationed in India, who described a young African slave and his French master whom she encountered while passing through Egypt (see below).

23 O'Fahey, "Slavery and the Slave Trade in Dar Fur," 29–43.

24 This paragraph synthesizes several sources including Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia*; Bowring, *Report on Egypt and Candia*; Madden, *Egypt and Mohammed*

Ali; de Laborde, “Chasse aux hommes dans le Cordofan,” 156–64; Perron, “Afrique centrale,” 66–67, n. 1; and Hill, *On the Frontiers of Islam*.

25 Selim Aga, “Incidents,” 17–18; Pallme, *Travels in Kordofan*, 179–83; Calixte de la Providence, *Les fleurs du désert*, 137.

26 Combes, *Voyage en Égypte*, 1: 127–28.

27 Buxton, *African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, 96–97n.

28 Fisher, *Slavery in History*, 18–32; Walz, *Trade between Egypt and Bilad as-Sudan*, 226. The term *hami* (literally ‘warm’) was used by *jallaba* en route to Darfur from Wadai in 1874 to describe slaves “whose legal status was open to question” (Nachtigal, *Sahara and Sudan*, 4: 231). See also Lovejoy, “Slavery, the Bilad al-Sudan,” 10–18.

29 For the basic laws of Islam on slavery, see Hunwick and Powell, *African Diaspora*, 1–9, 21–32; and Fisher, *Slavery in History*, 14–18.

30 Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia*, 283, 288, 290–91.

31 de Cadalvène and de Breuvery, *L’Égypte et la Turquie*, 1: 277–78.

32 Selim Aga, “Incidents,” 21; McCarthy, *Selim Aga*, 21.

33 Combes, *Voyage en Égypte*, 1: 139.

34 Calixte de la Providence, *Les fleurs du désert*, 139–42.

35 Hunwick and Powell, *African Diaspora*, 28–30.

36 The term ‘veteran in slavery’ comes from Samuel Ajayi Crowther, in Ajayi, “Samuel Ajayi Crowther of Oyo,” 310.

37 “Mr. P—” has been identified as Mark Piozzin, brother-in-law of Robert Thurburn (McCarthy, *Selim Aga*, 58, 74).

38 Robert Thurburn was a well-known merchant and diplomat in Egypt. The ruler of Egypt moved back and forth between Cairo and Alexandria, and European diplomats usually followed him. Most European merchants preferred to live in Alexandria, Egypt’s main port on the Mediterranean.

39 Selim Aga, “Incidents,” 34–5.

40 Selim Aga, “Incidents,” 26; Combes, *Voyage en Égypte*, 1: 139, 2: 182–88.

41 el-Tounsy, *Voyage au Ouaday*, 484.

42 Pallme, *Travels in Kordofan*, 163–64.

43 La Rue, “Brief Life of Ali,” 79. For similar reports: Wolff, *Journal of the Rev. Joseph Wolff*, 325–26; and Cuny, *Journal de Voyage*, 61–62.

44 Saint-Elme, *La Contemporaine en Égypte*, 3: 34–35.

45 Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt*, 175.

46 Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt*, 176.

47 Saint-Hilaire, *Lettres écrites d’Égypte*, 121–22.

48 Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt*, 177.

49 Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt*, 178.

50 Saint-Hilaire, *Lettres écrites d’Égypte*, 121–22.

51 Clot, *Compte rendu des travaux*, 96–101.

52 The views of Michel de Niello Sargy, another young French officer and

abolitionist, who kept a journal while serving in Egypt, are given in Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt*, 179.

- 53 Vaillant, *Correspondance de Napoléon I*, 4: 474.
- 54 Walz, *Trade between Egypt and Bilad as-Sudan*, 226, for the English translation; for the French text: Vaillant, *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 5: 490. The request was repeated 12 July 1799 (*Correspondance de Napoléon* 5: 507).
- 55 Champion, "30 Floréal year X," in Dorigny, *Abolitions of Slavery*, 229–36.
- 56 Pezzoni, "Rapport sur la condition des esclaves en Égypte," enclosed in Pezzoni to Nesselrode, Alexandria, 24 May 1828, in Cattaui, *Le règne de Mohamed Ali*, 1: *Rapports consulaires de 1819 à 1833*, 230.
- 57 See Helal's chapter in this volume.
- 58 A general account of this epidemic is given in Kuhnke, *Lives at Risk*, 69–91. The estimated number of enslaved Africans who died in Cairo in 1835 is from Mengin, *Histoire Sommaire de l'Égypte*, 472.
- 59 Kuhnke, *Lives at Risk*, 85.
- 60 Hamont, "[Review of] De la peste observée en Égypte," 457.
- 61 De Lesseps stated that the official statistics for Cairo excluded Europeans, Jews, Copts, blacks and the military, and that to account for these omissions the official mortality reports should be increased by a third. See De Lesseps, "Bulletin de la mortalité du Caire, d'Alexandrie et de Rosette."
- 62 Clot, *De la peste observée en Égypte*, 111–12, n. 2.
- 63 Walz, *Trade between Egypt and Bilad as-Sudan*, 216.
- 64 This replacement boom is reported by Austen, but he generalizes it over an entire decade. Austen, "Trans-Saharan Slave Trade," 23–76; and his "Mediterranean Islamic Slave Trade out of Africa," 218–19, 221, 232–33. The peak in the period 1838–40 is clearer from more detailed reports of the slave trade and is graphically presented in Manning, *Slavery and African Life*, Table 4.12, "Eastern Sudan: impact of slave exports," 76. The reasons for the boom are also discussed in La Rue, "African Slave Women in Egypt," 177–84.
- 65 For examples, see Moussa, *Le Voyage en Égypte*, 604–27.
- 66 St. John, *Two Years*, 50–52.
- 67 Legh, *Journey in Egypt*, 72–73.
- 68 Clot, *Mémoires*, 104.
- 69 Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt*, 180–81.
- 70 Voilquin, *Souvenirs* (1866), 342–43, 385–408.
- 71 Pezzoni, "Rapport," 232.
- 72 Pezzoni, "Rapport," 232.
- 73 Pezzoni, "Rapport," 232; Toledano gives a broader treatment of why slaves might wish to leave their masters (*As If Silent and Absent*, 60–107).
- 74 Pezzoni, "Rapport," 231.
- 75 Christians were not permitted to own Muslim slaves in theory, but there are several instances of this occurring.
- 76 Pezzoni, "Rapport," 233–38.

77 Lane, *Manners and Customs, Definitive 1860 Edition*, 155–56. Lane states in his introduction that this was rarely allowed, but then updates his comments to say that Europeans were exempt from this regulation.

78 Nerval, “Les Femmes du Caire,” 14–17. For more on Clot and African slave midwives see La Rue, “African Slave Women in Egypt,” 175, and the sources cited there.

79 St. John, *Two Years*, 48.

80 On del Signore, see Saint-Elme, *La Contemporaine*, 3: 34.

81 Saint-Elme, *La Contemporaine*, 4: 110–11.

82 Clot, *Aperçu général sur l’Égypte*, 1: 274.

83 Hill, *On the Frontiers*, 177–78.

84 Thompson, “Lane’s ‘Description of Egypt,’” 567; Nott, et al., *Indigenous Races*, 531–32.

85 Didier, *Sojourn*, 15; Voilquin, *Souvenirs*, 285; Nott, et al., *Indigenous Races*, 531–32.

86 Bowring, *Report on Egypt and Candia*; Madden, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali*.

87 Nott, et al., *Indigenous Races*, *passim*; Yates, *Modern History*, 2: 475–76.

88 Adolescent African males were rare in European households in Egypt: see the case of Murgian in the Gliddon household discussed below.

89 On the staffing of the Dussap household, La Rue, “African Slave Women in Egypt,” 181; for the Gliddon household, Nott et al., *Indigenous Races*, 531–32.

90 Nott, et al., *Indigenous Races*, 531–32.

91 Henniker, *Notes*, 175–78.

92 Griffith, *Journey Across the Desert*, 1: 252–53. Griffith identifies the artist as M. Prieste, but this was probably E. Prisse d’Avenues, an Egyptologist and an abolitionist.

93 *L’ami de la religion*, 438–39.

94 Yates, *Modern History*, 2: 476–77, unnumbered note. For a fuller discussion, La Rue, “A Brief Life,” 82–83.

95 Henniker, *Notes*, 177; for the more general practice see Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 157–60.

96 Nott, et al., *Indigenous Races*, 531–32.

97 Pezzoni, “Rapport,” 232.

98 Calixte de la Providence, *Les fleurs du désert*, 153–54.

99 Nott, et al., *Indigenous Races*, 531–32.

100 Skinner, *Adventures*, 1: 12–13. Rather than Nubian, he may have been from the Nuba Hills in southern Kordofan.

101 Deval, *Deux années*, 216–17.

102 See La Rue, “The Fatal Sorbet”; Puckler-Muskau, *Egypt under Mehemet Ali*, 1: 170; Hill, *On the Frontiers of Islam*, 38. For the consular report, Pezzoni, “Rapport,” 230.

5

Magic, Theft, and Arson: The Life and Death of an Enslaved African Woman in Ottoman İzmit

Y. Hakan Erdem

Despite a growing body of literature, studies on Ottoman-Middle Eastern slavery are still in a toddling stage and accounts written from the perspective of slaves are few and far between. Thus, one contributor to the debate, Eve Troutt Powell, was justified in every way when she raised the cry “Will That Subaltern Ever Speak?”¹ The dearth of scholarship in that quarter seems to mimic an original lack of slave narratives in Middle Eastern contexts. This is not to say that slave narratives in New World contexts do not present historiographic problems. Powell notes that such narratives “were published under the careful editing and supervision of white American abolitionists.”² However, we simply do not possess this genre of source material in the Middle East mainly because there was no abolitionist public to feed these narratives.

What we have are a variety of less personal but nonetheless valuable documents in the form of petitions, letters, court records, depositions, autobiographical notes, and even graffiti by slaves and former slaves. I do

not suggest that we should leave the effort to present slaves as subjects of their own history on the grounds of the meagerness of our sources. This type of material is extremely useful in establishing the agency of slaves. In an earlier work, using depositions and petitions by slaves, I attempted to show that slaves were far from being silent tools in the hands of their enslavers. Those trans-Saharan slaves who did not seek freedom in Malta on their way to Istanbul from Tripoli were actively seeking it in their destination by petitioning the authorities.³

To be sure, most of this material was not the product of slaves' own hands. Depositions were recorded by authorities. Even petitions bearing the names of individual slaves were written by professional scribes or persons who were knowledgeable enough about the chancery styles of governments. In other words, most were 'mediated' documents. However, this is the nature of many other historical records and has very little to do with slaves being a subaltern category. In a seminal article summing up the history of the subaltern school of studies in 1994, Gyan Prakash noted how "the subaltern has emerged as a position from which the discipline of history can be rethought" and warned that "[t]his rethinking does not entail the rejection of the discipline and its procedures of research." In fact, this was a sincere call to be heeded by all, historians and non-historians: "There is no alternative but to inhabit the discipline, delve into archives, and push at the limits of historical knowledge to turn its contradictions, ambivalences, and gaps into grounds for its rewriting."⁴

It is particularly gratifying that Middle Eastern scholars and Ottomanists are quite detached from the mind-sets of 'area specialism' that earlier dominated their fields of study and are increasingly adept at deciphering their source material, among other things, "to recover experiences and voices of the ordinary, the subaltern, the outcast, and the marginal."⁵ It was perhaps, in response to such soul-searching that Ehud Toledano has recently come up with the first ever monograph explicitly written from the perspective of the enslaved, setting itself the goal of undoing silences and absences by placing "[t]he 'cameras' of our historical exploration . . . as much as possible, in the hands of the enslaved, rather than in those of the slavers, where they have rested in most standard documentary accounts."⁶

Delving into the archives with a mission to recover lost or suppressed voices seems to be the perfect thing for historians with sensitivity and being the 'tongue' with which any category of the subaltern can speak looks very attractive. This is certainly a commendable methodology.

However, if this path is to be followed, several caveats may be in order. First, the road to and from archives is beset with special quandaries. Historians, unlike other social scientists, need to be trained in dead languages and difficult calligraphies, and may simply or inadvertently err in their task of interpretation regardless of the methods they employ, especially when they attempt to voice the voiceless.

On a different and much more important level, there is also the question of “ventriloquism,” as Mark Reinhardt put it when he discussed the case of Margaret Garner, a fugitive slave from Kentucky who killed one of her children when she and her family were about to be repossessed in the neighboring free state of Ohio by the authorities in 1856.⁷ As I construe it, there can be at least two types of ‘ventriloquism.’ For the sake of simplicity I will call one ‘ancient’ the other ‘modern.’ Ancient ventriloquism, within the parameters of the abolitionist discourses, requires very little explanation. As Reinhardt points out “many abolitionists” were “committed to a division of labor in which whites agitated on behalf of passively suffering blacks.”⁸ One of the best examples of ancient ventriloquism in Middle Eastern-Islamic contexts, to the best of my knowledge, is *The History of a Slave* by H.H. Johnston. Written in the first person, this is a uniform, ‘autobiographical’ account of slave published in London in 1889. In all his excitement, honesty, and with the best of intentions, the good Mr. Johnston noted in his preface:

The ‘History of a Slave’ is an attempt to give a realistic sketch of life in the Western Sudan. It is the outcome of some considerable experience of the Dark Continent . . . I have pieced together the accounts given me by negro slaves . . . [I]t is not all humbug. Many of the incidents herein related I have actually witnessed during some one of my journeys in Africa.⁹

Cutely naive, fiction, partially ‘humbug,’ and belonging to a different age? Be that as it may, Reinhardt clearly demonstrates that ventriloquism continues in our own day, in the works of fiction writers as well as scholars. People continued to imagine, fictionalize, and fantasize, some self-avowedly in wishful thinking, to procure an ‘end’ for Margaret Garner without taking into consideration the fact that her death “was a matter of public record” and she “died of typhoid in 1858.”¹⁰

This, in my opinion, serves as a stark reminder to me as a historian before I embark on re-telling the story of Feraset, a black African girl

who, on one January night in 1867, set fire to her owners' house, was charged with arson, and in all likelihood met her death at gallows in a northwestern Anatolian town, İzmit, ancient Nicomedia. The series of events culminating in Feraset's execution might be called 'The Night of the Incident.' It could be imagined as a play, a tragedy in fact.

Cast

Feraset: An African female slave belonging to Şükrü Ağa, age unknown, should be young; home region in Africa unknown.

Selime: An African freed female slave, age unknown, should be middle aged; home region in Africa unknown, 'household comrade' of Lalifer.

Behnas: An African freed female slave, age unknown, should be older than Feraset; 'household comrade' of Feraset, possibly served at the household of Şükrü Ağa and Halide Hanım.

Zebra: A free African girl, country-born, daughter of Abdullah the Black, around the same age as Feraset.

Arab Saraylı: A freed African female slave, real name is unknown, served at the Imperial Palace in Istanbul, came to İzmit to retire, should be of middle age or more, shares a house with Behnas.

Lalifer: An freed African female slave, age unknown, should be middle aged, home region in Africa unknown, mother of Zeliha, 'household comrade' of Selime, had served as a hired cook in the household of the Customs Man.

Zeliha: A free African girl, country-born, daughter of Lalifer, around the same age as Feraset, serving as a hired cook in the household of the Director of Pious Endowments.

Abdullah: A freed African man, a denizen of İzmit, father of Zehra.

Süreyya: Serving as a cook at the household of Haşim Efendi, the head scribe of Customs, in all likelihood freed African female slave.

Şükrü Ağa: A denizen of İzmit, master of Feraset, husband of Halide Hanım, age and occupation unknown, a householder, a man of some substance.

Halide Hanım: A denizen of İzmit, mistress of Feraset, wife of Şükrü Ağa, age unknown, a housewife, owned some jewelry.

Arab Magician: A wanderer from Arabia, a seer, prepares magic potions and talismans, finds solutions to psychological problems or helps creating them.

Physician: A denizen of İzmit, probably a doctor of the old school, treats injuries.

Hacı Ahmed Ağa: A denizen of İzmit, been to Mecca, a respected man, a good neighbor.

Haşim Efendi: A government official in İzmit, head scribe of the Customs, employer of Süreyya, former patron of Lalifer and possibly of Selime.

Director of Pious Endowments: A government official, employer of Zeliha.

Customs Man: In all likelihood, Haşim Efendi.

Governor of İzmit: The sultan's chief representative in İzmit

Âli Pasha: The grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire for the fifth time, stayed in office until his death in 1871.

Abdüllâzîz: sultan, 1861–76, deposed by a coalition of the military and the bureaucracy, committed suicide or was assassinated.

Interrogators and members of various councils.

The Night of the Incident

Feraset's tale, which exists only in part but can be intertwined with the tales of others, is contained in an archival file belonging to an Ottoman institution of the so-called 'reform period,' or Tanzimat (1839–76).¹¹ The institution is the Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances that through one of its sections, the Office of Trials, served as a sort of high court. Cases of murder, injury, theft, and all other cases initiated in the Provincial Councils and requiring a punishment of hard labor were referred to the Supreme Council for confirmation and approval.¹² However, I doubt it served as a 'high court of appeal' in this case because the Provincial Council of İzmit with the help of a Commission of Inquiry merely investigated the case; it took no decision and left the matter to the Supreme Council for final deliberation. The case was decided for the first time at the high court and then referred to the grand vizier and the sultan for approval.

The legal process was initiated when Şükrü Ağa of İzmit, whose house was burnt down sometime in January 1867, wrote a petition to the local government conveying his suspicion that the fire was the result of arson. He blamed Feraset, his own enslaved domestic servant. The governor referred the case to the Commission of Inquiry and that body, comprised of Muslim and non-Muslim Ottomans in true Tanzimat spirit, summoned Feraset for questioning. Here, in fact, our story begins. Feraset's

and, later on, others' depositions were carefully recorded. As such, the depositions, for what they are worth, open a window to the world of the subaltern. They present a sheer contrast in their simple, vernacular Turkish with the usual Ottoman documents in their high flowing, bureaucratic style. This aspect truly enhances the feeling that words really belonged to Feraset and other members of the African community of İzmit. We may, after all, have the subaltern talking at long last, at least in the narrow sense of the word.

As it is a rare occasion to have such an extraordinary document series, a full quotation from Feraset might be in order rather than an attempt at paraphrasing. Let's hear what she said on 20 January 1867:

One day I went to the house of Selime the Arab. There was a white Arab diviner (*beyaz Arab bir bakıcı*) there. They told me, "Let this man prepare a charm for you so that your master manumits you." And I was disgruntled with (*dargın*) the mistress in those days. This Arab magician washed my hands and feet, took this water and said a prayer over it. They gave me a little of this water in a bottle and they said, "Make them drink some of the water and put some into their food and make them eat this as well." They also gave me this charm. I was intending to put the water in a water container but I was scared, saying, "I am going to poison them" as the water turned a bit reddish later on. Then, I poured this water in a corner of the garden. That night, together with the mistress, we went to the house of the Customs Man. Even before we took off our outer garments, I left for the Physician's house to show him my hand and I knocked on his door. The Physician did not happen to be there. Then again, Selime happened to be at some place there as a guest. She came up to me in front of the Physician's door and told me, "What now? You did not do yet what I told you to do?" and she said "You are not going to be somebody" (*sen adam olmayacaksın*). What she told me to do was that she has instructed me to burn down the house. We left there together and came to our house and I took the door key from the side of the wall and opened the door. We both entered and I went upstairs, took the drawer from the room of the mistress, brought it downstairs and gave it to Selime. And Selime told me, "Right now, put a candle inside the cabinet." I found a little piece of candle and placed it in the cabinet, on the planks from where I took the drawer. There was some cotton and a bundle in the cabinet. Then I went downstairs. I saw that Selime had

left. I locked the door, put the key in its place and went from there to the Customs Man's house where the mistress was. Then again, I was there when the alarm sounded "Fire in İmaret!" So I did this job like this.

Surely, Feraset's statement was a response to a question. It was not freely formed but perhaps shaped, even goaded. The interrogators told her they knew that someone else was instructing her, they seemed to know all the details, and there was no ground for denial. Still, Feraset's words are important in what they said and what they did not. When she was asked the exact time when Selime instructed her to burn the house, she responded:

[When I went to take the water, she said, "Do this job like this. They won't know that it is you. Then they will emancipate you. You come and stay with me."]

When asked to confess about her taking gold coins too from Şükrü Ağa's cabinet, Feraset was again forthcoming:

I got and put them in the drawer I took. The drawer contained diamond brooches, rings and pearls. I showed them to Selime when I was handing over the drawer to her.¹³

This was not Feraset's first questioning but was the one that was recorded. Acting on information from Feraset, the authorities had already apprehended Selime and kept her present during the interrogation. After finishing with Feraset, the interrogators turned to Selime and told her that there was no more a place for denial as Feraset thus "spoke in her face." Selime, however, was not nearly as forthcoming as Feraset:

The truth of this is that, this Feraset came to the Physician's house on that night. I, too, was invited for the iftar dinner at the house of Hacı Ahmed Ağa in that neighborhood. When I got up to go to my house I bumped into her there. She told me "I am going to set fire to the house" and "Let's go, I am going to give you something from there." We went to the house together, she opened the door of the house, and we entered. I remained downstairs, she went upstairs and bringing a smallish drawer, she gave it to me. While she was going upstairs, she said "Let me go

and set fire to the house, I am going to put a candle in the cabinet.” She climbed upstairs. I left and gave the drawer to Behnas, her household comrade. Then the house caught fire and burned.

When asked about Feraset’s first coming to her house and how she secured a charm for her, Selime said:

She came. Because I was ill, that priest (*boca*) was in our house. This [Feraset] had asked for a charm for her manumission. The priest gave her a charm and the water. Süreyya Kadın, the cook of Haşim Efendi, the head scribe of the Customs was in our house as well.¹⁴

In this session Selime also confirmed that she saw the contents of the drawer as well as a “white gold purse” she took.

This much should have been enough for the Ottoman authorities who were interested, unfortunately for the historian but like authorities investigating arson cases elsewhere, in establishing ‘intent’ rather than ‘reason’ or ‘motive.’¹⁵ However, there was also the question of theft and the stolen jewelry that still remained to be recovered. Therefore, the authorities had no option but to expand the investigation. In due course, other members of the African community of İzmit entered the scope of the inquiry and thereby into the historical record.

Next on the list of persons to be interrogated was Behnas, Feraset’s ‘household comrade,’ meaning that they had served in the same household. As Feraset was a new slave and there is no indication that she had served elsewhere previously, this probably makes Behnas a former slave of Şükrü Ağa. Behnas very strenuously denied that she had seen Selime on the night of the incident. She said, “On that night, my household comrade who lost her master and mistress after the fire came to us.” However, Zehra, daughter of Abdullah the Black testified otherwise:

I was there on that night and I was doing the dishes in the water closet. All of a sudden there was a knock on the door. Behnas came downstairs, holding a candle in her hand. This Selime entered and I was looking downwards. From the top of the stairs it is possible to see downstairs. Selime gave a drawer to Behnas and Behnas did not take it upstairs, putting it in the chest of Arab Sarayı [Behnas’s housemate] which was there. However, I do not know anything about the contents.¹⁶

Feraset had already confessed to arson and theft, Selime confessed to being a partner to the theft, but the stolen property was missing. The authorities imprisoned both, waiting for Selime to divulge the whereabouts of the stolen money and jewelry. More than a month's time passed with no tangible results. It was only then that the Commission of Inquiry interrogated Selime again, probably a little earlier than 28 February 1867. Selime told the Commission that she went to the house of Arab Saraylı the day following the burning of the house because Halide Hanım, Feraset's mistress, came to her own house, searched it, could not find anything but told her they had heard that her stolen effects were in Arab Saraylı's house. Upon this, Selime went to Arab Saraylı's house and found her lying in bed. Arab Saraylı explained that Feraset came to their house, shouted at them, and she developed a headache as a result. Then, Selime continued, Arab Saraylı admitted that Selime brought and gave the drawer to Behnas. When Selime asked what were they going to do she said, "O man, don't be sorry! Of course a solution will be found!" Selime maintained that when they had this talk Behnas was also present. The interrogation was adjourned. When they met again Selime was directly challenged by her interrogators, accusing her and Zehra of lying. Selime lost her resolve and told them that she gave the stolen effects to her own 'household comrade,' Lalifer. Lalifer who was oddly present there, flatly denied that she had received the drawer but told the commission that she was with Selime at the dinner invitation of Ahmed Ağa. Then Selime left and she did not see her again that night. Then it was Zehra's turn:

Sir, I have spoken thus on the night when I came here during Ramadan because Selime made a sign to me with her eye. I have said so, thinking that I was required to say so. I have seen no drawer at all. It is all a lie.

Upon this the interrogators confronted Lalifer once more and invited her to confess. She strenuously held her position. Then, using a new contrivance, the interrogators threatened both that they would sell their houses to compensate for the stolen money and jewelry. To this both Selime and Lalifer responded rather nonchalantly: "What we worry? Sell our houses."

On 28 February 1867 the Commission of Inquiry submitted its report to the Provincial Council. The interrogators summarized events in a

neatly sequential way. From it we learn a number of details that did not show up in the depositions. Feraset was reported to have denied everything at first but confessed later on. In fact, it was Feraset who let the authorities to know about Selime in the first place. Feraset left the house of the Customs Man “on the pretext of showing a swelling in her hand to the Physician.” According to this report, the drawer contained “jewelry, pearls and four rings.” Not only Behnas and Zehra but also Arab Saraylı were summoned on grounds of Selime’s claims despite the fact that no deposition, at least no recorded one, was taken from her. Selime who was a “manumitted slave who lived in her house by herself” displayed a lot of “deceit.” Lalifer was still adamant. The investigation was to continue but as it was already established that Feraset was an arsonist and Selime a thief and her accomplice; they had to be punished.¹⁷

Almost another month passed. The impasse was not broken but in March the Commission continued its investigation as planned. This time, the interrogators questioned Lalifer’s daughter Zeliha, as well as Lalifer for a third time. Zeliha’s deposition sheds no light on the case but it provides valuable information on the life conditions of freed and free Africans in İzmit. The questions put to her occurred in the following fast-flowing exchange:

Q. What do you do?

A. I am a cook in the mansion of the Director of Pious Endowments.

Q. Is your mother alive?

A. Yes, she is.

Q. What does your mother do?

A. My mum works in the gardens during summer time and spins cotton for others during winter.

Q. Do you have a house? If so, in which quarter?

A. Yes, we have a house. In Bostan [Garden] Alley.

Q. Does your mother work as a cook like you?

A. She did for seventeen months in the house of the Customs Man. She does not now as she is not sound of limb.

Q. How many months ago did you take up this job with the Director of Pious Endowments?

A. It’s been five months now.

Q. Your mum goes there to see you during these five months, eh?

A. She came twice, did not come anymore.

Q. You say she came twice. When did she come first? When was the second time?

A. The first was twenty days after I went there. When she came later, it was a month before Ramadan.

Q. How many times did you go to the other side after you took up employment with your master?

A. I went to my mum's house twice and both were around the time when I began to work.

Q. How many times did you see your mother during the Ramadan? How many times did she visit you?

A. Neither she nor I have seen each other.

Q. How many rooms has your house got?

A. Our house has got three rooms.

Q. Is there anybody else living with your mother?

A. There is not anybody else.

Q. What if we summon your mother and she says, "I have seen my daughter during Ramadan and she has seen me as well." What are you going to say?

A. I have not seen my mother at all.

Q. Have not you gone to your house during the Ramadan at all?

A. No, I have not.

[Lalifer enters]

Q. How many times has your daughter visited you after she went to work to the house of the Director of Pious Endowments?

A. My daughter came when I was ill. She had received half a salary. She bought me two horse-loads of coal and stayed for two nights, then left. I have not seen her again. She did not come. She came to the police headquarters, she saw me there.

The details of the case being already disclosed, this time the Commission wrote a much shorter report to the Provincial Council. It simply stated that despite "all the promises and stern communications in line with the allowed manner," both Selime and Lalifer stuck to their original positions. However, from Zeliha's deposition it was clear that Lalifer was not the recipient of the stolen things.¹⁸ The governor convened the Provincial Council on the same day, 15 March 1867. They prepared a report and with it they transmitted all the accumulated documents, reports, and depositions for the first time to Istanbul to be reviewed at

the Supreme Council. According to this report, what Feraset “dared” to do was “treason.” Selime slandered Behnas, Lalifer, and Arab Saraylı. As there was no clue that they were involved, all three were discharged. However, both Feraset and Selime confessed to their crimes “out of their free will” both to the Commission and the Provincial Council.¹⁹

The case was referred to the Supreme Council on 18 March 1867 and retained there for almost two months. The Supreme Council indicated that as a confessed arsonist Feraset should be executed in line with the Article 163 of the Penal Law “in a public place in İzmit to serve as a portent for her likes.” The problem was Selime. She did not participate in arson in person but “gave her counsel and was united” with Feraset in contemplation. It was clear that she was an accomplice. However, the Penal Law did not provide anything for accomplices in arson. Therefore, since the punishment for theft only was considered too light, the Supreme Council suggested that Selime be punished according to Article 175 of the Penal Law, which provided hard labor for accomplices in murder. Still hoping to recover the stolen effects, the Council also suggested that the interrogations should be deepened before Feraset was executed.²⁰ On 5 June 1867, Âlı Pasha, the grand vizier, reported the case to the sultan and asked for his endorsement of the punishments. Âlı Pasha summarized the case once more in the true Ottoman way and specified that Selime’s punishment be five years’ hard labor to be carried out in the women’s prison. Next day, Sultan Abdülaziz consented, repeating that the “said incendiary” should be executed by hanging. He did not say anything specifically about Selime. Nevertheless, we should not infer that he did not accept this part of the procedures as there is an expression in his *irade* (official decree) to the effect that the “details of the case” should be conveyed to İzmit as suggested by the grand vizier.²¹

Thus ends the story of Feraset as gleaned from archival texts. The legal process initiated by a suspicious slave owner culminated in a command from the highest authority in the land, the sultan, that the accused arsonist should be executed. Though we have no record of the execution there is every reason to suppose it was carried out unless she prematurely died in prison or escaped.

Arson, Theft, and Magic

There is very little historiography on arson in the Ottoman Empire, whether by slaves or free Africans or other aggrieved groups. There

is insufficient evidence to form a hypothesis that arson was “a form of violent protest,” as Albert C. Smith found to be the case in Black-Belt Georgia.²² Similarly, Ottomanists have no equivalent to “the great Albany fire of 1793,” as a case of slave rebelliousness attributable to “the fondness for freedom.”²³ Two cases of arson by Africans are discussed by Toledano when he tackles the general question of crime by enslaved individuals. In the first of these cases an enslaved African man named Rihan was convicted of burning a house in Varna in 1862. Toledano maintains that the Supreme Council as the High Court “ruled that Rihan should be put to death by crucifixion in public” but “the sultan thought that the death penalty was unwarranted here and commuted the sentence to seven years in prison.”²⁴

The sultan had of course the prerogative to commute a death sentence but I am unaware that crucifixion as a method of execution was employed in the Ottoman Empire. That it was makes intriguing reading especially in the framework of a reforming empire. The articles of the Ottoman penal law on arson are quite categorical on this point; they do not specify crucifixion. If our case is to shed some light on this issue, Feraset was condemned to death by hanging.

As in some other legal systems, the Ottoman legislators distinguished between settled regions and the open countryside as well as inhabited and derelict buildings when specifying punishments for arson. Article 163 of the penal law reads:

Those persons who deliberately set fire to all kinds of buildings, inhabited or otherwise, within cities, towns and villages and inhabitable and usable buildings and vessels in the open are to be punished by the death sentence whether they own this property or not.

The next article was almost as harsh. It stipulates life imprisonment for persons who harmed others’ property in non-inhabited places. Those persons who harmed the property of others inadvertently when they set fire to their own property would be punished with hard labor.²⁵

These were truly harsh punishments. For example, harsher than antebellum Georgia’s where arson was punishable by death “but only if the incendiary act occurred within a city, town, or village.”²⁶ However, comparisons with antebellum America have their limits of usefulness. The new Ottoman law of the Tanzimat era was not harsher for slaves

unlike the American case where two systems of law existed, “one for free-men and one for slaves.”²⁷ Such a dual system was certainly the case in the Ottoman Empire as far as the Sharia is concerned, but, then again, there the opposite is true as prior to the Tanzimat and the issuing of the penal law, the Sharia provided lesser punishments for slaves, who were accorded half the punishment due a free person. In the Tanzimat era Ottoman law became harsher for slaves as the state became oblivious to free-slave differences when it came to punishing the slaves.²⁸ It should be noted here that Ottoman legislators were not particularly sensitive to slaves as presenting a threat to the social order but to fires that did great havoc in Ottoman cities, mostly built of timber.

The second arson case Toledano writes about, like our case, also involved theft. In 1861, an African female slave named Dilferah burnt the mansion of her masters in liaison with her lover in Salonika. “After a search of the burnt house, it was discovered that money was missing from a drawer in the harem.” Consequently, Dilferah was given the death sentence, and her lover, ten years’ imprisonment, in absentia. As in our case, there is no record of the actual execution. Toledano thinks that the only way for her to have avoided execution was to have sought forgiveness from her master who could ask that the sentence be commuted. I doubt this ever happened, since arson was not regarded as a crime against an individual like murder that could be negotiated with the relatives of the deceased under the stipulations of the Sharia.

Toledano finds the burning of the house intriguing and this might have some bearing on our case as well. He writes:

The burning of the house is the hardest part to explain, as it does not make sense. The documents remain forever silent about that. Why did Dilferah torch the house? It was superfluous to the main purpose she and Ahmet had in mind, for they could have taken the money she stole from the harem drawer and run immediately. . . . Dilferah did not expect to get caught, but somehow this is not enough. We need something else to complete the story, to explain the woman’s behavior in this tragic story.²⁹

We may justifiably ask the same question of our heroine: why did Feraset torch the house? Toledano speculates that the missing element might be “rage, uncontrollable anger.” I would certainly not rule out this possibility. However, Feraset seems to have been quite in charge of her

emotions. Unlike Dilferah, who fled after the fire, she simply returned to the Customs Man's house and continued to live with the family, except for the 'Night of the Incident' when she spent the night at her household comrade's house. If not uncontrollable anger, could it be resentment—resentment that she was a slave—that prompted Feraset?

Noting that "most arsonists went unpunished, remaining anonymous and almost invisible to the criminal justice system" and relying on the work of E.P. Thompson, Smith observes: "It is this anonymity that provides the most plausible rationale for understanding the origins of arson as protest in Black-Belt Georgia."³⁰ It might be that Feraset, living through one of the ultimate forms of a relation of domination, wished to remain anonymous. After all, who could say that she wished to be identified? She did not expect to get caught either. Hence, the incendiary device which could well have been taken for an overlooked candle as it certainly must have been the situation in many accidental fires. I am aware that this hardly makes Feraset a Medea and her story is hardly a story of empowerment, at least a planned one. Who would come to respect whom after an accidental fire?

Then there is the ugly and mundane question of theft. The emotional background of Feraset's actions aside, can we hit upon the sought answer in that quarter? "Other arson incidents may have resulted from attempts to disguise burglaries," writes Smith.³¹ Using R.C. Steinmetz's taxonomy, Kennedy notes five categories of motives for arson. Category four is "Concealment of some other criminal act."³² Can we explain the burning of the house(s) as an attempt to disguise the burglary itself then? I am somehow inclined to think that, at least in Feraset's case, this provides a viable explanation of her actions. How and why Feraset brought herself to the idea of theft and arson is a related but separate story.

As to the dimension of magic in this story, we know that Feraset asked for a charm to secure her freedom and that she received not only the charm but a bottle of magic water as well. The fact that the water turned reddish may indicate that it was not simply water used to wash Feraset's hands and feet but some sort of potion or mixture. We also know that on the night they talked about burning the house and plans for afterward, Selime offered to share her house with her. Why should Feraset be scared that she might poison the members of the household if she was absolutely sure that it was nothing but some gratifyingly dirty water? Unless, of course, she knew that it was poison. Was there something more

sinister than theft and arson planned on that night? Was murder on the agenda as well? Something in the original plans as divulged by Feraset and Selime simply does not make sense. How would arson bring about Feraset's emancipation? Why should a now impoverished family who lost their house, accumulated money, and all their assets free Feraset? Would not it make better sense to convert their remaining property into cash and sell Feraset? Selime's offer makes sense if the plan was to murder the masters for Feraset. With masters and house gone, but with plenty of resources now in hand Feraset could set up house with Selime. In fact, Selime's offer might have been designed to embolden Feraset to proceed as planned. Surely, this line of thinking had a major flaw: Feraset did not use the potion/poison but discarded it. In any case, Feraset, who had already passed the limits of her day-by-day resistance, was on the verge of an act of big defiance.

Ottoman history has few examples of communal acts of rebellion or resistance by African slaves; only individual acts of resistance involving murder are on the record.³³ The infinitely more developed historiography of antebellum slavery can offer some insights into the role of conjurers on resistance by African slaves in the Ottoman contexts. Conjurers as healers of the sick, fortune tellers, and interpreters of the unknown were believed to determine the outcome of events and commanded fear and respect among their fellow slaves. Establishing their linkages with African religion and practices, Walter Rucker points out to their pivotal role in slave rebellions as well as day-to-day resistance by slaves. Slaves would arm themselves with talismans on the eve of uprisings to render themselves invincible or would simply take comfort or protection from such amulets in their daily lives. The conjurers had also "mundane means of retribution," notes Rucker: "Their knowledge of roots and herbs gave them the simultaneous ability to cure the ailing and to poison wrongdoers."³⁴

Could we say, then, that Feraset on the eve of the 'Night of the Incident' was armed both by a good-natured amulet to protect herself and a bottle of poison intended for the 'wrongdoers'? In order to elicit an answer we need more information about the conjurer. This is not easy to come by. Evidently, the conjurer was not a fellow slave. He was described as a "white Arab diviner" by Feraset. This is a reflection of the common Ottoman usage in which black Africans were invariably and colloquially termed 'Arabs' and ethnic Arabs were 'white Arabs.' If

so, it means that the conjurer was a freeborn Muslim. What powers he invoked—God, angels, demons, a specific demon, the jinn—is a matter of conjecture. What was he doing in Selime's house? Selime was careful enough to describe him as a harmless cleric rather than a conjurer and claimed that he had been invited to heal her sickness. However, Feraset's deposition indicates that he was not a healer of the sick, certainly not of physical injuries. It is very telling that Feraset did not show him the swelling in her hand but sought help from the physician. It seems that like many other people Feraset had a clear division of labor in her mind: for spiritual problems she went to the conjurer and for physical ones she went to the physician.

Almost certainly the language he spoke to Feraset and other members of the African community in İzmit was Turkish. However, Arabic may also have been an option. Many African slaves reached Turkish areas of the Ottoman Empire only after they spent some considerable time in the Arab provinces in North Africa or in Arabia. It is just possible that Selime was one such person. If this was the case we might expect her to act as an interpreter for others who were not conversant in Arabic. I am inclined to assume that Arabic rather than Turkish was the language the conjurer used while speaking to Feraset, on two counts: Feraset never mentioned him in the singular but always used 'they.' Second, Feraset would easily know that he was a 'white Arab' if he spoke in the Arabic language. I also believe that he played a larger role in persuading Feraset to carry out the deeds she did. In her account, the offer of a talisman comes from 'them,' not from herself. Selime, on the other hand, said that it was Feraset who asked for a talisman. In either case, there is no talk of money or gifts in return for the services he rendered to Feraset. Why, indeed, was he so generous? For what was he hoping? Amazingly, the Commission of Inquiry let this man go without extracting a deposition from him. Why? Was he already out of the town?

In this context, Selime's own role should be assessed. Unlike many other deposition givers among the diasporic Africans of İzmit, Selime's livelihood is unknown. That she was a manumitted slave was explicitly mentioned, but the question was never put to her. Why? Was it because the interrogators had a fair idea of who she was and what she did? We know that she owned her house, but was it enough? Her 'household comrade' Lalifer also owned a house, and she was required to take a menial job to earn a living. How did Selime manage to make ends

meet? Her house seems to have been a meeting place for members of the African community of İzmit. As a senior member of the community she seems to have been well respected. In fact, she was a well-respected neighbor by members of society at large as indicated by the dinner invitations she enjoyed. She seems to have had some influence on other members of the African community. Zehra was willing to offer false testimony merely on the strength of a secret sign from her. But was she something beyond that?

I have already written on the subject of slave religion in the Ottoman Empire. Recently, Toledano gave the subject fuller treatment.³⁵ Could Selime have been a cult leader, or a priestess of the so-called slave religion, variously known as a *godya* or *kolbaşı*? However, there is no direct evidence that she was. The position of *godya/kolbaşı* was recognized by the Ottoman authorities. I would expect the Ottoman documents to have mentioned her position in that case, but they do not. Indirect evidence—the fact that Selime seemed to have had some control over Feraset, that she offered her a place in her house, and that she received the stolen effects—is very scanty if not outright circular. It seems more likely that she was one of the *ablas*, meaning an elder sister, a kind of experienced, older freed female slave who in the eyes of the Ottoman slave holders ‘corrupted’ the young and inexperienced slaves. Leyla Saz paints a very dark picture of the *ablas*: “When a Negress becomes entangled with an *abla* and falls under her influence, she is lost. She starts by stealing everything that she can at her master’s house in order to give to the *abla*” For Saz, the *ablas* were nothing but sorcerers and served under the *godya* to exploit the labor of slaves and freed slaves who were members of their cult. Leyla embellishes her account and writes that the *ablas* would seize the personal jewelry of African females as well as their wages. But she grudgingly admits: “Those who did not have a position, or who were without work, always looked to the *abla* for refuge or, if they could find none there, to the *godia*.³⁶ One needs to be careful in using data coming from an obviously biased source at face value but it would be safe to assume in this case that Feraset was attempting to replace one relationship of domination with another. In an exchange of an unequal sort, Feraset was offered accommodation and protection in return for stolen money and jewelry. Magic played a part, possibly as catalyst. The spiritual or magic dimension of the story is bound to be one of the murkiest points in this story, which raises many questions and answers few. There

is no evidence that the talisman and the potion were specifically African, and in any event local Ottomans, Turks, Arabs, and others had recourse to such charms to realize their wishes. Feraset's charm brought her neither luck nor protection.

Questions

Feraset was a young African woman who lived a bonded life in İzmit in an age when social and political change in the empire was accelerating. She was the only slave among all the Africans who gave depositions in this case or was even mentioned in them. She must have had her hopes, fears, and beliefs, among them the desire to be free. She believed in the power of talismans. She had faith in a conjurer no less than in the judgment of one of her elders. She feared that she might cause the death of her masters, inadvertently or otherwise. Segments of her life became a matter of public inquiry. We can guess these bits of her thoughts because she committed a criminal act.

Nonetheless, Feraset speaks to us through Ottoman records. Her silences were as important as what she said. She revealed little on her relations to the family that held her in slavery. She explained how she wished to be manumitted as she was not on good terms with Halide Hanım “at the time,” implying that they patched up for their differences later. The word she used, ‘disgruntled’ or ‘cheesed off’ (*dargin*), is light and neutral, not a word that implies abuse or ill treatment. It can be used between friends or people who were somehow on equal footing. Was Feraset hiding her real-life experience? Was she reticent, for example, talking about abuse, sexual or otherwise, in the household? This is a legitimate question to ask. However, when we consider the fact that it was her master who initiated the judicial case it seems unlikely. The master of a household would not want to let this be known to others, especially in a patrimonial culture that sympathized with ill-treated slaves. Moreover, Feraset who was being charged with a capital crime would no doubt have brought this fact to the authorities’ notice, knowing and hoping that this would be a redeeming factor for her. Yet, it seems clear from the court documents that she was not asked any question about this point by the Commission. One can always argue that she gave pertinent answers to the questions put to her. On the other hand, Feraset’s ‘grudge’ does not seem to be substantial enough to justify arson. The fact that she decided on her own not to give the family the potion might indicate that she

thought they did not deserve to die. In any case, Feraset registered no complaint of abuse. It is all the more telling that in the face of a death sentence Feraset proved unwilling to change or embellish her first deposition, to incorporate a tale of abuse apart from what she might normally have endured as a slave. The question of ill treatment and abuse aside, the very fact that Şükrü Ağa appealed to the authorities is enigmatic in itself. Would it not have been wiser for him to keep her or even better to sell her to compensate for some of the losses of the family? What good would come from a dead slave? The crucial bit of datum here seems to be the burglary. Şükrü Ağa must have reasonably hoped to recover the stolen wealth by identifying her as the prime suspect who acted in a network. In addition to Feraset, the master should be identified as one of the prime losers in this episode.

Through her act, Feraset showed that she did not consent to subordination, did not want to continue to live as a slave, and decided to change her life in a fundamental way. That much is clear. But why did she not escape? This was an option for her. She could have run away, claimed ill-treatment, and taken refuge with either the Ottoman authorities or with foreign representatives. The fact that she had relative freedom of movement about the town, including during nighttime, and she could socially associate with other Africans indicates that her masters did not think that there was an immediate risk of her running away. It is plausible that Feraset did not want to leave her social and physical environment. She wanted to be free like the other members of her community.

What could life offer to Feraset? Provided that her plans worked, what alternatives were waiting for her as a free member of the African diasporic community in İzmit in the mid-nineteenth century? What was her projection for life in freedom apart from Selime's offer to give her housing? One could argue that freed and free African women, like Lalifer and her daughter Zeliha as well as Süreyya and possibly Zehra, had difficult lives and had a hard time in making ends meet by their toil, so there would be very little amelioration in her living conditions upon gaining freedom. Would Feraset have been happy working as a cook or as a domestic servant in the household of some government official or local notable? Could she have hoped to live a life in retirement as, for example, Arab Sarayı did with Behnas and Selime did with Lalifer, establishing her own house and raising her own family? In this context, it should be noted that the Ottoman institution of 'household

comradeship' functioned as a fictive kinship mechanism. Slaves and freed slaves who had served at the same household looked to each other for support. This must have made the diaspora experience a little more bearable for Feraset and other members of the African community in İzmit by creating networks. We can imagine that Feraset hoped for such a future when she took refuge with Behnas on the night of the incident. We will never know the complete story. No doubt encouraged by Selime, she weighed her options and decided in favor of freedom. She opted to accelerate her choice by drastic actions, not wishing to wait to be manumitted in the accepted ways of Ottoman society. Her agency came with a heavy price.

Notes

- 1 Powell, "Will That Subaltern Ever Speak?" 242–61.
- 2 Powell, "Will That Subaltern Ever Speak?" 245.
- 3 Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 172–73; see also Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 149–51.
- 4 Prakash, "Subaltern Studies," 1475–90. Quotations are from 1489.
- 5 Gershoni and Woköck, "Doing History," 1–18.
- 6 Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 8.
- 7 Reinhardt, "Who Speaks for Margaret Garner?" 81–119.
- 8 Reinhardt, "Who Speaks for Margaret Garner?" 84.
- 9 Johnston, *History of a Slave*, v–vii.
- 10 Reinhardt, "Who Speaks for Margaret Garner?" 115.
- 11 BOA/İrade/Meclis-i Vala/ 25557, 3 Safer 1284–6.6.1867 and enclosures.
- 12 Seyitdanlioğlu, *Tanzimat*, 119.
- 13 BOA/İrade/Meclis-i Vala/ 25557, Feraset's Deposition, 14 Ramazan 1283–20.1.1867.
- 14 BOA/İrade/Meclis-i Vala/ 25557, Selime's First Deposition, 14 Ramazan 1283–20.1.1867.
- 15 In 1957, a professional arson investigator in the United States put it succinctly: "The reason, motive or incentive is not an essential element of the crime of arson. Therefore, it is not necessary to prove the motive in order to convict the arsonist, according to our law." See Kennedy, "Investigating Arson Incentives," 709–16. Quotation is from 709.
- 16 BOA/İrade/Meclis-i Vala/ 25557, Depositions of Behnas and Zehra, 14 Ramazan 1283/20.1.1867.
- 17 BOA/İrade/Meclis-i Vala/ 25557, Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 23 Şevval 1283/28.2.1867. All the second round of depositions are enclosures to this report.

- 18 BOA/İrade/Meclis-i Vala/ 25557, Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 9 Zilkade 1283/15.3.1867. Zeliha's and Lalifer's depositions are enclosures to this report.
- 19 BOA/İrade/Meclis-i Vala/ 25557, Report of the Provincial Council to the Grand Vizier, 9 Zilkade 1283/15.3.1867
- 20 BOA/İrade/Meclis-i Vala/ 25557, Report of the Supreme Council, 21 Muharram 1284/25.5.1867.
- 21 BOA/İrade/Meclis-i Vala/ 25557, Report of the Grand Vizier, 2 Safer 1284/5.6.1867 and the Sultan's sanction (İrade), 3 Safer 1284–6.6.1867.
- 22 Smith, “Southern Violence,” 527–64, 540.
- 23 Gerlach, “Black Arson,” 301–12.
- 24 Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 178.
- 25 For the penal law see *Düstür*.
- 26 Smith, “Southern Violence,” 552.
- 27 M.K.M. and A.J.S, “Capital Punishment in Virginia,” 102–103.
- 28 For a discussion of slaves’ punishment by the secular law of the empire, Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 158–60.
- 29 Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 181.
- 30 Smith, “Southern Violence,” 554.
- 31 Smith, “Southern Violence,” 555.
- 32 Kennedy, “Investigating Arson Incentives,” 709.
- 33 For murder by African slaves see Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 181–92.
- 34 Rucker, “Conjure, Magic, and Power,” 84–103. Quotations are from 98.
- 35 Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 173–76 and Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 204–61.
- 36 Saz, *Imperial Harem of the Sultans*, 75.

6

Slavery and Social Life in Nineteenth-Century Turco-Egyptian Khartoum

Ahmad Alawad Sikainga

Writing in the mid-nineteenth century, James Bayard Taylor, the American traveler and diplomat, described the population of Khartoum, the capital of the Turco-Egyptian regime, as:

a curious compound of Christian, Turk, and Barbarian. On the same day, I have had a whole sheep set before me, in the house of an Ethiopian Princess, who wore a ring in her nose; taken coffee and sherbet [sic]¹ with the Pasha; and drank tea, prepared in the true English style, in the parlor of a European. When to these remarkable contrasts is added the motley character of its native population, embracing representatives from almost every tribe between Dar Fur and the Red Sea, between Egypt and the Negro kingdoms of the White Nile, it will readily be seen how rich a field of observation Khartoum offers to the traveler.²

Despite his Euro-American biases, Taylor's remarks captured the essence of nineteenth-century Khartoum: a remarkably cosmopolitan town in the heart of a predominantly rural country, and a site of intensive

social and cultural interaction. Indeed, these characteristics were vivid signs of the major transformations that were taking place in the Sudan under Turco-Egyptian rule (1821–84). Turkish policies involved rapid expansion of commerce, slavery and slave trade, migration, urbanization, and social dislocation. This chapter elucidates one aspect of this extraordinary transformation, namely the development of urbanism as a way of life and leisure activities. This inquiry is particularly concerned with the role of marginal groups such as slaves, ex-slaves, women, migrants, and other socially dislocated people in the development of a distinctive urban popular culture in Khartoum, which reflected their backgrounds, their experience, their identity, and their encounter with modernity. Despite their marginality, the chapter argues, these groups made significant contributions to the development of urban popular culture in contemporary Sudan. Their impact can be seen in the areas of music, dance, ritual practices, dress, and sports. Examining the life of marginal groups in nineteenth-century Khartoum offers a new perspective on Sudanese history in which Anglo-Egyptian colonial rule (1898–1956) tends to be seen as the main catalyst for social change. This study contends that it was during the Turco-Egyptian period that the seeds of social transformation in modern Sudan were sown. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that the Anglo-Egyptian period of Sudanese history is often referred to as *al-Turkiyya al-Thaniya* (the second Turkish period).

The conspicuous contributions of marginal people to the development of urban popular culture cannot be grasped without a detailed examination of the demographic composition of Khartoum. The social and cultural life of these groups has received little attention in the literature on slavery and slave emancipation in Africa and the Middle East. The few studies that dealt with the legacy of slavery in northeastern and North Africa have focused mainly on the role of ex-slaves in the dissemination of the *zar* cult (spirit possession) and other religious practices. One of the notable exceptions, however, is Laura Fair's work on colonial Zanzibar, which examines how former slaves used music, dress, and fashion to express their identity and to redefine their position in the coastal society in East Africa.³ Fair's work illustrates the numerous ways in which former slaves realized emancipation at both the ideological and practical levels as well as dramatic transformations in personal identities. This pioneering study has clearly shown how popular culture became a central stage on which these new identities were played out.

Within the broader framework of Sudanese historiography, unveiling the cultural and the social practices of slaves and their descendants will illuminate the various ways in which marginal groups carved out social spaces and developed distinctive cultural idioms through which they articulated their feelings, aspirations, adaptation, and resistance to systems of domination.⁴ The Sudanese case provides important insights into the dynamics of social resistance to the hegemonic paradigm of Arabization and Islamization, which is at the core of the post-independence Sudanese conflicts. As this chapter illustrates, the popular culture of contemporary Sudan reflects a high degree of hybridity and cosmopolitanism that are not acknowledged in the prevailing oversimplified discourses conventionally used to describe the country's protracted struggles. Sudanese conflicts are often framed in terms of binary oppositional categories: an Arab/Muslim/North versus an African/Christian/South. As the recent events in Darfur and in the eastern parts of the country have clearly shown, the so-called Arab North is not a monolithic entity, but a remarkably diverse and complex region that is inhabited by a multitude of ethnic and linguistic groups, with different cultural traditions.

Significant knowledge of social and cultural life in nineteenth-century Khartoum and the role of slaves and other marginalized groups can be gleaned from a wide range of sources including oral traditions, biographies, memoirs, and the writings of Egyptian and European officials, residents, and missionaries. However, the voluminous writings of European and American travelers who visited the Sudan in the nineteenth century constitute one of the richest sources of information. They included the French Charles Didier, Edmond Combe, and Guillaume Lejean; the Americans Charles Chaillé-Long and James Bayard Taylor; the Britons James Hamilton and Samuel Baker; and the Germans Wilhelm Junker and Karl Richard Lepsius. Despite their stereotypes, idiosyncrasies, and subjective views, the accounts of these travelers attest to the existence of a vibrant social and cultural life that set Khartoum apart from other nineteenth-century African and Middle Eastern cities, with the exception of perhaps Cairo, Fez, and the coastal towns of East Africa.

Khartoum: The Evolution of a Colonial Town

The choice of Khartoum as the headquarters of the Turco-Egyptian administration in the early 1820s was driven by a number of considerations. Located at the confluence of the Blue and the White Niles and



COPY OF PLAN OF KHARTOUM AS IT WAS IN 1884
COMPILED BY THE INTELLIGENCE BRANCH OF THE WAR OFFICE FROM INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY
BARON SIR RUDOLF VON SLATIN PASHA K.C.M.G. C.B.
REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE DIRECTOR OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

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Map of Khartoum, 1884. On the eve of the Mahdist capture of Khartoum, the city had a core of Turkish and European style houses spread out along the banks of the Blue Nile, backed by an extensive area of 'native huts.'

surrounded by abundant water and fertile land, Khartoum was an attractive site. Its location in the heart of what became the Sudan, and so far away from borders with neighboring countries, gave the Turks a sense of security. The origin of the name Khartoum is unclear. Explanations of its meaning ranged from Nilotic to Nubian languages, to the Arabic word for elephant trunk, referring to the narrow strip of land extending between the Blue and the White Niles, which is shaped like the trunk of an elephant.⁵ Nonetheless, Khartoum is located near an old historic settlement that predates the ancient Sudanese kingdoms of Nubia. When the Turks arrived in the early nineteenth century, Khartoum was one of several farming and fishing villages. Prominent among those was Tuti Island, Hillat Khojali, Hillat Hamad, al-Halfaya, and al-Fitayhab. The inhabitants of these villages included several Arabic speaking communities such as the Ja'aliyyin and Shayqiyya as well as the Mahas, a Nubian people who hailed from northern Sudan.⁶

Until the 1830s Khartoum was nothing more than a small administrative and military post. The main buildings included army barracks, a

hospital, and about five hundred houses. However, the integration of the Upper Nile regions into the Turco-Egyptian commercial network in the early 1840s had a major impact on the demographic and spatial growth of the town. With its strategic location on major land routes and waterways, Khartoum attracted many foreign and local firms and individual merchants who engaged in the lucrative trade in the Upper Nile regions. From their headquarters, these traders sent expeditions to the White Nile, the Upper Blue Nile, and neighboring regions to obtain ivory, ostrich feathers, and slaves. In the second half of the nineteenth century Khartoum became the economic hub of the country, with vibrant commercial markets and bazaars where local and imported Middle Eastern and European goods were bought and sold. Sudan's exports included gum Arabic, leather, handcrafts, ostrich feathers, and jewelry. European imports ranged from clothes, hats, linen, and household utensils to jams, macaroni, and French and Greek wines.⁷

At the beginning, Khartoum's spatial growth was not organized. Its streets and narrow alleys ran in all directions, and with the exception of government offices, the overwhelming majority of the buildings consisted of mud and adobe houses and straw huts. Moreover, Khartoum's blazing summer heat and chronic dust storms were a source of misery for its foreign residents. James Hamilton, the British traveler who visited Sudan in 1854, had this to say about Khartoum:

[T]he atmosphere is that of a vapor bath, and the moderate use of ardent spirits becomes absolutely necessary to preserve health. There is perhaps no country where spirits seem at all seasons more requisite; during the great heat of the months when I was in Soudan, I plead guilty to having imbibed more araki⁸ [sic] mixed with water than I had drank in my whole life previously; I sometimes took even a pint a-day, and this without ever experiencing the slightest symptom of intoxication.⁹

However, the mid-nineteenth century witnessed some progress in Khartoum's urban planning and the town's appearance improved considerably. Turco-Egyptian officials, European consuls, missionaries, and wealthy merchants took advantage of the waterfront and built red brick offices and houses along the bank of the Blue Nile. On this subject, Taylor wrote in the early 1860s:

The city is larger, cleaner and better built than any of the cities of Upper Egypt, except perhaps Siout. It extends for about a mile along the bank of the Blue Nile, facing the north, and is three-quarters of a mile in its greatest breadth. The part next to the river is mostly taken up with the gardens and dwellings of Beys and other government officers, and wealthy merchants. The gardens of the Pasha, of Moussa Bey, and the Catholic mission are all large and beautiful, and towards evening, when the north wind rises, shower the fragrance of their orange and mimosa blossoms over the whole town.¹⁰

Similar impressions were expressed by Wilhelm Junker, the German traveler and naturalist who passed through Khartoum in the 1870s on his way to the Upper Nile. Junker was impressed by the quality of the buildings, particularly the governor's palace, the houses of Turco-Egyptian and European residents, gardens, and the vegetation.¹¹

Residential patterns in Khartoum reflected its colonial character and its prevalent social divisions. While the upper classes such as government officials and foreigners lived in their well-built houses near the waterfront and in the city center, local people, including slaves, discharged soldiers, workers, sailors, and the urban poor congregated in the shanty towns of Salamat al-Pasha, Hay al-Nuba, Hay Kara, Haboub Darabani, and al-Munjara.¹²

By the mid-nineteenth century, Khartoum became a major urban center and a highly cosmopolitan town. Its population grew from an estimated forty thousand in 1860 to about seventy thousand in the early 1880s.¹³ Sudanese residents included Arabic-speaking Ja‘aliyyin, Shayqiyya, Mahas, and Danagla who migrated from the far north and found employment as boat builders and sailors, accompanying the ivory and slave raiding expeditions to the White Nile. There were also West African immigrants such as Hausa, Fulani, and Bornoans, most of whom came as pilgrims en route to Mecca. Quite often some of these pilgrims were stranded in the Sudan either on their way to Mecca or on their return.¹⁴

Khartoum was also the home of a large number of foreigners from the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe. The largest Middle Eastern group were the Egyptians, most of whom were soldiers, traders, and employees of the government. The Egyptian community included Coptic Christians who engaged in trade and were also employed as accountants and bookkeepers. Numbering about five hundred families, the Copts

established their own school and church and became a well-established community in the Sudan.¹⁵ Even after the collapse of the Turco-Egyptian regime in 1884, many Copts were employed as clerks and bookkeepers during the Mahdiyya (1884–98). Other Middle Eastern and North African groups included Syrians, Lebanese, Libyans, Tunisians, and Moroccans.

The Slaves

It is a commonplace that the Sudan became one of the most active slave dealing zones in Africa in the nineteenth century. The acquisition of slaves for military purposes and the exploitation of Sudan's natural resources were the primary goals of the Turco-Egyptian conquest. At the beginning slaves were obtained from the non-Muslim communities in the present-day southern Sudan, the Nuba Mountains, and the Upper Blue Nile through organized government expeditions, and were drafted into the Turco-Egyptian army. However, as a result of the high mortality rate during the journey to Egypt as well as the growing pressure of European powers, the Turco-Egyptian government became less involved in the slave trade and left the business to individual merchants and private firms.¹⁶ From the 1840s onward, the slave trade was dominated by Egyptians, Levantines, Europeans, and local Sudanese traders. Although the majority of the slaves were exported to Mediterranean and Middle Eastern markets, many were sold to buyers in the northern parts of the Sudan where they were used as domestic servants and laborers.¹⁷

As the seat of the government and the headquarters of the major firms, Khartoum became a major slaveholding center. According to some estimates, slaves formed between one half and two-thirds of the city's population in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ Slaves came from diverse ethnic and regional backgrounds. They included southern Sudanese groups such as Bari, Shilluk, Dinka, and Fertit; Nuba from southern Kordofan; Oromo from Ethiopia; and others from the non-Muslim communities in the Sudan-Ethiopia border regions. Slave owners included the Turco-Egyptian government as well as individuals from the Middle East, Europe, and northern Sudan. Government slaves were enlisted in the army, while those who were not fit for military service were used as workers, porters, street cleaners, and domestic servants in the houses of government officials.

Khartoum had a major slave market where slaves were sold by dealers. The business was governed by certain rules. The sales were conducted through contracts between buyers and sellers. Before the sale was completed, the buyer would pay a deposit and was allowed to keep the slave in his house for three days to ensure that he/she had no mental or physical 'defects.' Defects were defined in Muslim jurisprudence and included such conditions as syphilis, leprosy, pregnancy, bedwetting, and mental illness. After the buyer had ascertained that the slave was free of any defect, the sale would be completed. If the buyer discovered a defect, he was entitled to return the slave and recover his deposit.¹⁹ However, because the definition of a defect was often subjective and also differed from one school of jurisprudence to the other, there were numerous disputes between buyers and sellers.²⁰ The price of the slave was determined by such factors as age, health, and gender. The highest prices were paid for strong, healthy males and young, attractive females. In general, females were highly desired for their productive and reproductive roles. They were classified into several age groups and the most desired were those between the age of eleven and fifteen. Abyssinian women commanded high prices because they were considered attractive. For instance, in 1837 the price of an Abyssinian female slave ranged from 600 to 1,500 piasters while that of a Dinka woman was one 100 to 200 piasters.²¹ Though prices fluctuated they steadily increased in the later part of the nineteenth century in response to growing demand.

Khartoum also attracted a large number of runaway and liberated slaves. Freed male slaves were employed as soldiers, porters, and guards on the boats that traveled to the south, while runaway and manumitted female slaves engaged in prostitution and the selling of local alcoholic drinks such as *araqi* and *marisa*. These women established *anadi* (sing. *indaya*), a Sudanese term for local bars, where they sold drinks to male customers. The *indaya* is an old leisure establishment in the Sudan where workers and the urban poor who could not afford to buy imported drinks found entertainment and companionship.²² The *anadi* continued to thrive in the Sudan until the late twentieth century when the regime of Jafar Numeiri introduced what came to be known as the 'September laws' in 1983, which prohibited alcohol in the country.

Runaway and liberated slaves became the primary target of Christian missionaries who arrived in Sudan in the early 1840s. Most of the

missionaries were Italian Catholics such as Jesuits, Franciscans, and Verona Fathers. One of the most active was the Comboni Mission, which was established by Bishop Daniel Comboni who arrived in the Sudan in 1854. In addition to offering the slaves asylum, the missions targeted those freed by British and other European agents in the Red Sea and the White Nile regions, particularly after the official abolition of the slave trade in the late 1870s. Another important source of converts were orphans and the children of slave women who were abandoned by their European fathers.²³

The missionaries opened a school for orphans who were given instructions in Christian teachings in Arabic and Italian as well as arithmetic, singing, and drawing. Some young boys and girls were sent to Europe to receive further training in theology and other technical skills. Initially, Sudanese students were trained at the Mazza Institute in Verona, but after 1867 they were trained in Cairo and the Nigrizia Institute in Italy.²⁴

The missionaries hoped that these evangelized Africans would return home and spread Christianity in their communities. For instance, Giuseppe Habashi was an Abyssinian slave who was baptized in Khartoum in 1851 and then taken by the Franciscans to Verona to be trained in theology. Habashi was ordained as a priest and returned to Khartoum and later went to Egypt and Palestine.²⁵ Caterina Zaynab was born in the Upper Nile. In 1861, she was sent for education to Verona and in 1867 she returned to Egypt where she became a teacher in the Comboni School in Cairo. In 1874 she married an Italian carpenter in the mission church in Khartoum. A child, Maria Vincenza, was born and christened in Khartoum but died in infancy. Caterina, now a widow, next married Ernst Marno Bey, an Austrian in the Egyptian government service. They had a son, Jakob Ernst, born in 1880, who died in Khartoum in 1955.²⁶ One of the most celebrated Sudanese converts was Bakhita, a slave woman from Darfur, who was baptized in Venice in 1890 after she had been sent to Italy where she eventually became a nun. She died at Schio, Vicenza and was canonized in 2000.²⁷

According to the Comboni baptism registry 684 people were baptized in the Sudan between 1842 and 1898, most of whom were ex-slaves.²⁸ The main ethnic groups from which the converts came were Dinka, Bari, Nuba, and Oromo. In general, converts adopted biblical or Italian first names but kept their African and Arabic names (examples: Antonio Abdalla, Carolina Adam, and so forth). The register gives little information about their

religious background, but judging by their last names, it can be assumed that some of them were Muslims, though adoption of Arabic names without conversion to Islam was and is very common in Sudan.²⁹

Conversion of ex-slaves to Christianity led to the emergence of a Christianized African community in a predominantly Muslim society. This small group played a significant role in the spread of the faith in their own communities in southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains, particularly after the Anglo-Egyptian conquest in 1898. However, the outbreak of the Mahdiyya in 1881 and its subsequent victories dealt a serious blow to missionary activities in the Sudan. By 1883, most of them left and were unable to return until 1898.

Europeans in Khartoum

Khartoum had a small, but a dynamic European community. Turco-Egyptian military and civilian personnel included Albanians, Bosnians, Maltese, Sardinians, and Italians. The business community involved British, French, Greeks, Jews from Europe and the Middle East, Syrians, and Armenians. The arrival of European traders was facilitated by the treaties made between the Ottoman Empire and European powers to allow freedom of trade throughout Ottoman domains. Coupled with this was the failure of the 1848 revolts in Europe, which led to an influx of people, particularly Germans and Italians, to Egypt and the Sudan. In the late 1870s, the number of European families living in Khartoum was estimated at one hundred Greek, forty Austrian, forty German, twenty French, twenty Russian, fifteen Italian, and ten Armenian.³⁰

The majority of Europeans who came to Egypt and the Sudan hailed from lower- and working-class backgrounds. They came from diverse ethnic and regional origins and can hardly be described as a community. As Richard Hill put it, “they were permanently united for only one unanimous aim: to make money.”³¹ Europeans in Sudan routinely hid their humble backgrounds and inflated their social status. According to Hill, “there was an unspoken rule that would be observed: you did not pry too deeply into your neighbor’s past, and he, in return, did not poke his nose into yours.”³² For instance, Mari Bey, a Corsican who commanded the police in Khartoum in 1854, claimed that he had been a colonel in Napoleon’s army. His fellow officers, who knew his background, nicknamed him ‘le Colonel Tapin’ or the drummer colonel. James Hamilton described Europeans in Khartoum as follows:

Civilization and barbarism have met, and each has contributed its peculiar vices to the common stock. A few Europeans, the most ignorant of whom possess a degree of intellectual development rarely found among the Orientals, are here brought together from all nations and all classes; six weeks removed from European news, and as many months, or rather years, from the march of European refinement, they are naturally thrown upon each other for means of killing time in their self-imposed exile.³³

According to Hamilton, these Europeans would spend several months in the White Nile regions trading in ivory and slaves and “devote the rest of the year to the consumption of araki and other enjoyments which Chartum affords, and in preparation for a fresh start.”³⁴

The upper echelons of the European community included the consuls and representatives of various European nations. Several European countries established their consulates in Cairo and opened branches in Khartoum. The most notable of those were the Austrian and the British consulates. However, with the exception of the Austrians, European countries often appointed European or Middle Eastern traders to represent them. Many of these traders-consuls were infamous ivory and slave dealers who became a major source of embarrassment for their governments.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the social life of Europeans in Khartoum was their involvement with female slaves. Most of them came as single men and took young female slaves as wives or mistresses, with major social consequences. Indeed, interracial sexual relations between European men and African women, particularly during the colonial period in the twentieth century, has received considerable attention in the feminist literature for it involved important issues such as race, gender, power relations, and privilege. For instance, in her work on Asia, Ann Stoler argued that concubinage during the colonial period was a “domestic arrangement based on sexual services and gender inequalities which ‘worked’ as long as European identity and supremacy was clear.”³⁵ These dynamics had a direct impact on the children born out of these relationships. Fearing social stigma at home, many Europeans abandoned their slave wives and children in Khartoum when they returned home. As mentioned previously, these children became the primary target for Christian missions who converted and canonically married them. As an eyewitness put it:

At this moment there are Abyssinian women with children begotten by their dead European masters who live in the greatest poverty. Some become the mistresses of newly arrived Europeans and the children of former unions are cast out into the streets and merge with the native population. Some Europeans have deserted their own wives and children in their own lands and have formed new and illegitimate families here.³⁶

While a few orphans and children born out of wedlock found shelter with the missionaries where they received basic education, the majority fell into misery and lived by begging in the streets. Still, some of these mulattoes achieved upward social mobility and became physicians, engineers, and teachers in Egypt and the Sudan.

Some slave women married multiple times. Marie Peney was an Oromo woman from western Abyssinia. Her husband, Alfred Peney, chief medical officer in the Sudan, took her as a mistress soon after his appointment in 1850 and married her in 1855. After his death in 1861, she married several European men. Another example was Eugene de Pruyssenaere de la Wostyne, a Belgian traveler who was in Sudan between 1856 and 1864 and who married an Oromo slave woman given to him by an Arab shaykh. She was christened as Maria Amina. After his death she married Martin Ludwig Hansal, the Austrian vice-consul.³⁷

Leisure and Social Life in a Colonial Town

As a 'bazaar' of cultures and ethnicities, Khartoum became the site of an active social life. To overcome daily routine and the inhospitable climate, Khartoum's foreign residents engaged in a wide range of leisure activities that reflected their diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. They developed a distinctive, hybrid, urban culture that included Middle Eastern, European, and local Sudanese elements. Leisure activities in Khartoum also reflected its social and class distinctions. Turco-Egyptians officials introduced Middle Eastern forms of entertainment while the leisure activities of local Sudanese, including slaves and other marginal groups, involved cultural practices from the Sudanese hinterland and adjacent regions such as Abyssinia, the White Nile, Kordofan, Darfur, and Ubangi-Chari. The interaction between these diverse groups gave birth to a dynamic urban culture that had a lasting impact on Sudanese society.

To many Turco-Egyptian officials, life in the Sudan was a form of exile. As mentioned earlier, they detested the climate and remained nostalgic

for the social life of Cairo and other metropolises in Egypt, Turkey, and Eastern Europe. In their effort to create a familiar environment, they tried to reproduce the cultural traditions of their origin by organizing dancing parties in their homes to entertain European diplomats, travelers, and merchants as well as Sudanese dignitaries. According to Charles Chaillé-Long, who visited Khartoum in 1876, “dancing and singing is almost the nightly recreational activity in Khartoum.”³⁸ However, the forms of entertainments introduced by the Turco-Egyptians clearly reflected the Middle Eastern palace culture where rulers held lavish parties in their palaces and gardens where young slave girls performed. The use of young slave women as dancers in palace parties is deeply rooted in Middle Eastern history, from Abbasid caliphs to the Ottoman sultans. For instance, during the Abbasid period these singing girls, known as *qiyan* (sing. *qayna*) were trained to sing and entertain their masters. The majority of them were Africans, mainly from Abyssinia, Nubia, and East Africa. They received a long and expensive training by their masters, who often used them as a source of income by hiring them out as entertainers and prostitutes.³⁹ The dancing girls in Middle Eastern societies were treated as sexual objects and their performance in palace parties was intended to satisfy the fantasies of the spectators, who lustfully gazed at their bodies and moves. This was best described by al-Jahiz, the famous Muslim man of letters, who wrote:

But when one comes to consider singing-girls, three of the senses are involved all together, and [the pleasure of] the heart makes a fourth. The eyes have the sight of a beautiful or [otherwise] attractive girl (since cleverness and beauty are hardly ever simultaneously possessed by a single object of enjoyment and delight); the hearing has from her its need of that which is attended by no inconvenience, that in which organ of hearing finds its sole delight; touching her leads to carnal desire and the longing for sexual intercourse. All these senses are as it were scouts for the heart, and witnesses testifying before it.⁴⁰

At the same time, the *qiyan* were perceived with a mixture of desire and suspicion. They were considered mischievous, insincere, and dubious. According to al-Jahiz:

The singing-girl is hardly ever sincere in her passion, or wholehearted in her affection. For both by training and by innate instinct her nature

is to set up snares and traps for the victims, in order that they may fall into her toils.⁴¹

In other words, these palace parties became cultural spaces of continuing dialogue, intrigues, and contestation.

To a great extent, these perceptions and practices resembled the prevailing realities of nineteenth-century Khartoum. For instance, Turkish officials held extravagant dinner parties in their homes, accompanied by music and dance by young slave women. In addition to their recreational functions, these palace parties were sites where Middle Eastern, European, and African traditions converged, and became venues for the dissemination and exchange of ideas and modes of behavior. James Taylor described a dinner party at the home of Musa Pasha Hamdi, the Turkish governor, to which he invited some prominent Sudanese tribal shaykhs. According to Taylor, the meal consisted of twenty courses that included meat, vegetables, fish, and fruits from the Pasha's garden as well as several varieties of French patisserie. Taylor noticed that the Sudanese guests were bewildered by the use of knives and forks. This was followed by coffee and smoking, as well as fireworks, as the Pasha ordered the firing of two or three rockets.⁴²

Wilhelm Junker, the German traveler, described a similar occasion. According to him,⁴³ dignitaries were seated according to their official or social rank and were served by an entourage of slaves. Drinks were served in crystal glasses. After coffee and cigarettes, a military band, composed of Sudanese soldiers, performed some Italian and French opera tunes. This was followed by a performance by two Abyssinian female dancers. The band consisted of a flute and fife players, a drummer, and a tambourine player. After the dance, guests were then treated to Middle Eastern orchestral music while glasses of pale ale were passed around. The banquet was then served and the guests were divided into groups of about twenty persons each. Europeans were entertained in a separate apartment in Western fashion with knives, forks, and spoons. Bordeaux wines and sparkling Asti were included. After dinner coffee and pipes were passed around again.

There seemed to be a competition among Khartoum's elite to use these events to display their opulence.⁴⁴ The practice spread among the Sudanese themselves. For instance, Nasra bint Adlan, the daughter of the last king of the Funj kingdom, who was a major figure in Khartoum's social scene, held a flashy dinner party in her home in 1852 in honor of Bayard Taylor, who had just arrived in Khartoum, which was attended

by the Austrian consul and other European officials. The dinner was followed by locally made drinks, music, and dancing.⁴⁵

As in Middle Eastern palaces, the hosts and their guests sat in a circle around the stage and gazed at the bodies of the dancers, most of whom were Abyssinian and Sudanese female slaves. There were also some Egyptian dancers, known as *awalim* who performed a dance that resembled contemporary Egyptian belly dance. Most of those began their careers in Egypt and were subsequently brought to Khartoum by Turco-Egyptian officials.

While Egyptian dancers wore wide silk trousers, with a thin white robe floating around their hips, Sudanese dancers wore *rabat*, which consisted of leather strips descending midway between the waist and the knees and decorated with bracelets and amulets. This revealing outfit, which Hamilton described as “the most fractional expression of a petticoat,”⁴⁶ remained the common dress for unmarried girls throughout northern Sudan well into the twentieth century.⁴⁷

Sudanese dancers rubbed their bodies with *dilka*, a locally made mixture of flour, sandalwood, oil, grease, and water that is rubbed over the body until a coating of the scurf skin is removed. The pleasant odor of *dilka*, which is used until today by married Sudanese women, is supposed to seduce the male partner.

The hair-styles of the dancers followed traditional Abyssinian and Sudanese patterns, which involved braiding as described by Hamilton:

The dancers were black slave girls, under the conduct of a celebrated black beauty, named I presume characteristically, (Fatat el-‘ibarah) “she has exceeded bounds”. This lady’s costume, particularly the head-dress, was most curious. The hair was drawn from the forehead to the back of the head in six hard rolls, three on each side, leaving the temples and ears entirely exposed, and gathered behind into a thick projecting mop of corkscrew curls, forming two sharply defined tiers so strongly gummed that they offered to the hand the resistance of a horse-hair cushion.⁴⁸

Similarly, the performance reflected the dancing styles of the ancestral homes of the dancers, including Abyssinia and the southern and western Sudan. This laid the foundation for a distinctive urban dancing style that was a blend of local Sudanese, Abyssinian, and Egyptian elements. European travelers who attended these parties provided

minute details of the physical features of the dancers, their ethnic and regional backgrounds, and their moves and gestures. These descriptions, however, reflected European attitudes and perceptions of African and Middle Eastern societies. Their accounts were a mélange of exoticism, amusement, and disdain. Indeed, European travel literature on Africa, the Caribbean, and North America was replete with all kinds of metaphors and stereotypes about African women. The body of the black woman represented an interesting paradox. While more often than not it appeared as beautiful and desirable it was also perceived as crude and dangerous.⁴⁹ Hamilton, for instance, found Sudanese dance monotonous and distasteful, in comparison to Egyptian dance. As he put it:

The difference between the dance of the Soudan and Egypt is as great as it is possible to conceive; the vibratory movements of the muscles of the trunk in the latter, if sometimes disgusting enough, are accompanied by no small display of activity, and even grace; in the other, the constant slow up heaving of the body in a vertical plane is both ugly and monotonous.⁵⁰

Although the majority of the musicians were Egyptians who played Middle Eastern instruments, Sudanese members of the military bands of the Turco-Egyptian army, who were trained in brass instruments, played a leading role in these performances. In addition to playing Egyptian harmonies, these soldiers performed musical tunes from their home areas in southern and western Sudan. For instance, Junker relates that one of the most interesting pieces played at a party was a Bari song from the White Nile, which was arranged by the Austrian consul.⁵¹ The practice of creating military marches based on tribal songs from the home areas of soldiers was subsequently followed by the British in the twentieth century.

The lyrics often expressed romantic themes and were sung in colloquial Sudanese Arabic. The following stanza is part of a song performed at one of the palace parties:

*The breeze of the spring-time blows,
But our beloved where is he?⁵²*

Despite their scarcity, the lyrics of such songs provide crucial insights into the cultural world of the slaves, their identity, and their hopes. These songs laid the foundation of a rich tradition that came to be known in

contemporary Sudan as ‘women songs.’ These songs were composed by women and were performed during wedding ceremonies. Although they were pioneered by former female slaves, these songs became popular because they expressed the concerns, the aspirations, and frustrations of all Sudanese women who live in a male-dominated society. One of the most important genres of women songs was called *tum tum*, a particular singing style that emerged in the urban centers in the early twentieth century.⁵³ The lyrics were in Sudanese colloquial Arabic. It is a commonplace that the overwhelming majority of Sudanese slaves came from non-Arab and non-Muslim communities and had to learn the Arabic dialect of their particular host communities. Like their counterparts elsewhere, the first generation of Sudanese slaves developed their own ‘pidgin’ Arabic, which reflected their native languages and northern Sudanese colloquial Arabic. As in the case of African slaves in the New World, the later generations of Sudanese slaves lost their ancestral languages and spoke Arabic. One of the most intriguing aspects of the process of assimilation can be seen in the experience of the Sudanese soldiers who served in the Egyptian army who became highly influenced by Egyptian culture. They spoke Egyptian colloquial Arabic, adopted Egyptian dress, and saw themselves as a distinctive community within the Sudanese society.⁵⁴

It is important to point out that the palace culture of Khartoum’s elite and the popular culture of the common people were not discrete entities and the boundaries between the two were never clear cut. Palace performances and dancing styles quickly spread and the Egyptian *awalim* became popular in wedding ceremonies and other occasions throughout Khartoum.

Religious Festivals

Beside the private parties of the political and economic elites, Khartoum was the scene of numerous religious festivals and feasts. In addition to its grand mosque, the city had many religious institutions such as the *khalawi* (sing. *khakwa*), which offered religious instruction as well as the *zawiyas* of the various Sufi orders. The *khalawi* were run by *fakis* who taught the Qur'an, writing, and reading. Some of those were Hausa, Fulani, and Bornoans from West Africa. The *khalawi* received considerable support from the Turco-Egyptian government in the form of money and food. At the same time, the government sent Sudanese students to Egypt to study at al-Azhar.

Festivals were organized to celebrate religious holidays. One of the most popular was the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan. A large musical parade was held in the streets of Khartoum, attended by the governor, senior government officials, leaders of various religious orders, and the general public. Each community and religious group carried its own banner. The celebrations continued throughout the month. Life came to a standstill during Ramadan as most shops closed during the day and government employees took off time from work.

Another festival was *Mwlaid al-Nabi*,⁵⁵ or the Prophet Muhammad's birthday. Ceremonies were usually held in the evening for several days. One of the most important features of this ceremony was the performance of *dhikr* (Sufi liturgy), which included dervish singing and dancing. This is a ritual through which the participants endeavor to reach a state of perfection through uninterrupted meditation and the chanting of the divine attributes of God.⁵⁶ The *dhikr* has remained one of the most popular religious activities in the Sudan. Ex-slaves and their descendants played an important role in these festivals. The conversion of slaves and their descendants to Islam was facilitated by the *khalawi* and some of them became prominent figures in the various Sufi orders.⁵⁷ In addition to finding an emotional release in *dhikr*, ex-slaves and non-Arab groups added an 'African' element to the performance, particularly its tempo and dancing style.

The World of Slaves and Subalterns

While Khartoum's political and economic elite entertained themselves in their palaces and homes, slaves, liberated slaves, and the urban poor pursued their leisure activities in their neighborhoods, the streets, public spaces, and in the *anadi*. These sites created unmonitored social spaces for these communities to entertain themselves, to express their feelings, and to live out the cultural traditions of their home areas. The enslaved people of Khartoum asserted their place in this colonial town by holding festivals, carnivals, and street dancing. Pellegrino Matteucci, the Italian explorer who lived in the Sudan in the late 1870s, described at some length what seemed to be an archetypical carnival of the Sudanese slave community in Khartoum. Matteucci relates that one day each year the slaves would boycott work and gather at the Muqrana, a poor neighborhood at the confluence of the Blue and the White Niles. They wore dresses from their home areas and other colorful costumes, played music,

and danced. They elected a ‘king of the slaves’ and staged satires on the behavior of their masters:

Everyone was laughing, for the slaves had laid aside their chains—though tomorrow they will be enchain'd anew. Almost every tribe of Central Africa was represented on the great plaza—from Wadai to the Equator, from Mongbetu to the Galla, not a single tribe was missing.⁵⁸

Carnivals are ancient traditions that were practiced in different parts of the world. For instance, in early modern Europe, the *charivari* carnivals provided ordinary people with a reprieve from the rigidity of everyday life and became a liberating tool and a symbolic challenge to the prevailing social hierarchies.⁵⁹ However, in the New World, especially in Brazil and the Caribbean, carnivals became major venues for slaves and their descendants to celebrate their African traditions and values, which were denigrated by their European masters.⁶⁰

Among the most important avenues of leisure activities in Khartoum’s shantytowns and neighborhoods were the *anadi* and brothels. As mentioned previously, the *anadi* were run by freed female slaves who sold *araqi* and *marisa*. Prostitution was also rampant and was a major source of livelihood for women who could not otherwise earn a living. Prostitutes came from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. They included Abyssinian, Sudanese, and Egyptian women. Prostitution emerged as organized sex work in response to the demand that accompanied urban growth and migration to the city, but emancipated women resorted to it out of a lack of other opportunities. Indeed, prostitution was an argument used by both slave owners and later colonial officials against emancipation. Yet slave owners often encouraged their female slaves to engage in prostitution and received part of their income. In addition to brothels in poor neighborhoods, prostitutes rented rooms in private homes, while others wandered in the markets and coffee houses.⁶¹

In a sense, the marginality of female slaves in Sudanese society gave them a relative degree of freedom that allowed them to challenge the social norms of northern Sudan. Emboldened by alcohol, these women stood in the street corners and aggressively solicited clients. According to eyewitness accounts, the women sometimes shouted or sang obscene lyrics in which they extolled their physical attributes and offered themselves

to men who passed by.⁶² In one song, a woman spoke about how prostitutes deliberately sought married men to stir jealousy in their wives. The song goes as follows:

*Kandrok kandrok: we don't like bachelors.
We prefer married men
We set fire in the hearts of their wives
We make them feel the bitter taste of the hanzal [bitter cucumber or colocynth].⁶³*

The song illustrates the contempt of marginalized women and their rejection of the prevailing ethos that ascribed them to a low social status and bestowed respectability upon the freeborn women. Until the late twentieth century, the female slaves who worked in wedding parties and carried the *shayla* (cloth and jewelry gifts) from the groom to the bride's home, were asked to uncover their heads in public to differentiate them from the seemingly superior *sittat* or freeborn women.

The prostitutes were considered the greatest nuisance by Muslim religious leaders in Khartoum who complained about their boldness and audacity. For instance, in the late 1870s Shaykh Ali Abdalla of the Qadiriyah Sufi order in Khartoum sent a petition to Charles Gordon, the governor, complaining that his *zawiya* was surrounded by brothels where the prostitutes not only engaged in immoral behavior, but also caused great disturbance by their continuous beating of drums, singing, and dancing.⁶⁴

In a sense Khartoum's way of life was an anomaly in the Sudan, where the vast majority of people lived in rural areas and followed a traditional way of life. It is not surprising that new urban life style that characterized Khartoum became one of many sources of contempt toward Turco-Egyptian rule. In the eyes of the Mahdist rebels who rose against the regime in the early 1880s, Khartoum was the epitome of corruption and moral decadence and the symbol of all evils of Turkish rule. The city finally fell into the rebels' hands in January 1885 following a debilitating siege. After a brief stay in the city of the 'infidels,' the Mahdists established their capital across the river in Omdurman. Many of Khartoum's residents, particularly the foreigners, had fled during the chaotic period of the siege, while the rest of the population moved to Omdurman. In 1886 the remaining buildings in Khartoum were destroyed and what

was once a thriving town became nothing more than rubble. With the encouragement of the Khalifa Abdullahi, the Mahdi's successor, a large number of Mahdist followers migrated from the Kordofan and Darfur regions and settled in Omdurman where they became a major base of support for the new regime.

The destruction of Khartoum marked the end of a distinctive era and the beginning of a new one. The eradication of all vestiges of Turkish rule and the establishment of an Islamic state became the cornerstone of the policy of the Mahdist state. The khalifa introduced austere laws governing public life and social behavior. In addition to imposing a strict dress code on women, the mixing of sexes in both public and private ceremonies was prohibited and so was the use of tobacco and alcohol. Punishment for these offenses carried flogging and imprisonment.⁶⁵

The Mahdist regime was short lived as it was defeated by the joint forces of Britain and Egypt in 1898. Although the conquest was undertaken under the motto of 'restoring' the Egyptian sovereignty in the Sudan, in reality, the British were in full control. The 'restoration' of Egyptian authority was symbolized by the reestablishment of the capital in Khartoum. Within a few decades, the old Turkish town was revived and regained its prominence as Sudan's political and social hub.

Conclusion

The topic of slavery and social life in nineteenth-century Khartoum illuminates a number of important themes that have wider implications both within and outside the Sudanese context. The processes of urbanization, modernity, and leisure activities in Africa are often associated with European colonialism in the twentieth century. Khartoum is distinguished by the fact that it experienced these developments at an earlier period and under a non-European imperial rule.⁶⁶ The city metamorphosed from a small fishing village into a major administrative and commercial hub. Khartoum's diversity and cosmopolitanism were reflected in its hybrid popular culture that blended both foreign and local elements. The presence of a large slave population in Khartoum played a critical role in shaping the city's character and social life. Slaves brought with them cultural traits from their home areas in the Sudanese hinterland and these traits had a profound impact on the cultural traditions of northern Sudanese society, particularly in the areas of music, dance, rituals, and other social and artistic activities.

As mentioned earlier, the urban popular culture of contemporary Sudan has become a site of a struggle between competing notions of Sudanese identity and social order. It also encapsulates important themes that dominated contemporary Sudanese history such as the struggle over ethnicity, modernity, and the role of Islam in Sudanese society. To the Mahdist movement, the social patterns and cultural practices that emerged in Khartoum during the Turco-Egyptian period were an anathema and a symbol of moral decadence. However, despite their relentless efforts to eradicate these traits, they persisted and were given a new lease in life under the Anglo-Egyptian rule. Khartoum was revived and once again became a site of a vibrant social life and leisure activities, in which ex-slaves, their descendants, and other marginal groups played a leading role. This hybrid, urban popular culture continued to thrive in the post-colonial period, but became the target of the Sudanese Islamicists, who gained considerable influence in the early 1980s and eventually took over power through a military coup in 1989. The assault on popular culture, particularly singing, dancing, and other leisure activities, began with Numeiri's 1983 September laws and culminated in the series of 'public order' laws that were enacted by the current regime in the 1990s under the auspices of the so-called 'cultural project.' One of the many goals of that project was the establishment of an Islamic state, which entailed a radical restructuring of Sudanese society and the eradication of social and cultural practices deemed 'un-Islamic.' In this way, popular culture became a site of confrontation and resistance. However, through the creativity, defiance, and adaptation of ordinary people and marginal groups, Khartoum's popular culture survived the cultural project and contributed to its final demise.

Notes

- 1 Sudanese term for lemon juice.
- 2 Taylor, *Journey to Central Africa*, 275.
- 3 Fair, *Pastimes and Politics*.
- 4 On this perspective see, Kelley, "Not What We Seem," 75–112; and Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance*, 183.
- 5 Sidahmad, *Tarikh madinat al-Khartum*, 85; and Abu Salim, *Tarikh al-Khartum*, 8.
- 6 Abu Salim, *Tarikh al-Khartum*, 11.
- 7 Junker, *Travels in Africa*, 178.

8 A local alcoholic drink, called *araqi* in Sudanese colloquial Arabic. The name was probably taken from *araq* (*arak*), an aniseed-flavored drink ubiquitous in the Middle East. However, it is not the same.

9 Hamilton, *Sinai, the Hedjaz*, 318.

10 Taylor, *Journey to Central Africa*, 276.

11 Junker, *Travels in Africa*, 174.

12 Abu Salim, *Tarikh al-Khartum*, 39.

13 Sidahmad, *Tarikh madinat al-Khartum*, 298.

14 On West African migration to Sudan in the twentieth century, after the establishment of the Gezira Scheme where they worked as agricultural laborers, see Duffield, *Maiurno*.

15 Abu Salim, *Tarikh al-Khartum*, 46.

16 Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*, 12.

17 Spaulding, “Slavery, Land Tenure, and Social Class,” 1–20.

18 Taylor, *Journey to Central Africa*, 278; and Sidahmad, *Tarikh madinat al-Khartum*, 253.

19 Sidahmad, *Tarikh madinat al-Khartum*, 255.

20 In many Muslim societies, the question of what constitutes slave defects was source of endless disputes between buyers and sellers and these disputes were often referred to Muslim jurists to decide. See Sikainga, “Slavery and Muslim Jurisprudence,” in Miers and Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, 57–72; and Toledano, “Representing the Slave’s Body,” 57–74.

21 Sidahmad, *Tarikh madinat al-Khartum*, 257.

22 For a more elaborate account on the evolution and the role of the *anadi* see al-Tayyib, *al-Indaya*.

23 Santi and Hill, *Europeans in Sudan*, 10.

24 McEwan, *Catholic Sudan*, 20.

25 Bano, *Mezzo secolo*, 12, 253.

26 Bano, *Mezzo secolo*, 11.

27 Wheeler, *Announcing the Light*, 27–28.

28 Bano, *Mezzo secolo*, 10.

29 Bano, *Mezzo secolo*, 10.

30 Abu Salim, *Tarikh al-Khartum*, 46.

31 Santi and Hill, *Europeans in Sudan*, 10.

32 Santi and Hill, *Europeans in Sudan*, 10.

33 Hamilton, *Sinai, the Hedjaz*, 317.

34 Hamilton, *Sinai, the Hedjaz*, 317.

35 Stoler, “Carnal Knowledge,” in Leonardo, *Gender at the Crossroads*, 60–61.

36 Santi and Hill, *Europeans in Sudan*, 10.

37 On Peney and Pruyssenaere de la Wostyne, see entries under their names in Hill, *Biographical Dictionary*; on Pruyssenaere, see also Bano, *Mezzo secolo*, 53, 329.

38 Chaillé-Long, *Central Africa*, 18.

39 Beeston, *Epistle*, 2.

40 Beeston, *Epistle*, 31.

41 Beeston, *Epistle*, 31–32.

42 Taylor, *Journey to Central Africa*, 281.

43 Junker, *Travels in Africa*, 179.

44 Junker, *Travels in Africa*, 179.

45 Sidahmad, *Tarikh madinat al-Khartum*, 253.

46 Hamilton, *Sinai, the Hedjaz*, 328.

47 Junker, *Travels in Africa*, 185.

48 Hamilton, *Sinai, the Hedjaz*, 326–27.

49 Fischer, “Imperial Gaze,” in Hewitt, *American Women’s History*, 3–19.

50 Hamilton, *Sinai, the Hedjaz*, 329.

51 Junker, *Travels in Africa*, 186.

52 Hamilton, *Sinai, the Hedjaz*, 329.

53 al-Tahir, *Ana Ummdurman*, 54.

54 Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*, 57–65.

55 *Mawlid*, as pronounced in the local dialect.

56 Junker, *Travels in Africa*, 189.

57 Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*, 164.

58 Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*, 164. I am grateful to Jay Spaulding for translating this letter.

59 Davis, *Society and Culture*, 103.

60 Alleyne-Dettmers, “Black Kings,” 241.

61 Sidahmad, *Tarikh madinat al-Khartum*, 294.

62 al-Jabri, *Fi shan Allah*, 69.

63 al-Jabri, *Fi shan Allah*, 68.

64 al-Jabri, *Fi shan Allah*, 68.

65 Makkawi, *al-Bina’ al-ijtima‘i*, 234.

66 Geschiere, et al., *Readings in Modernity*.

7

Enslaved and Emancipated Africans on Crete

Michael Ferguson

Scholars of African slavery in the Ottoman Empire have made significant progress in the past twenty years. According to Ehud Toledano, they have explained “the impact of foreign pressure, the mechanisms of home-grown manumission, the attitudes toward the institution, and the problems of suppression and abolition.”¹ Yet much is still unknown about the socio-cultural history of enslaved Africans in the northern tier of the Ottoman Empire—that is, north of the African shore—and even less about those who were emancipated, since most histories focus on slavery and end at the point of emancipation. Moreover, the few monographs that touch on this topic focus on the African communities of Istanbul and Izmir.²

The goal of this preliminary study is to broaden our knowledge of trans-Saharan Africans in the northern tier of the Ottoman Empire beyond these two cities. As in Istanbul and Izmir, those on Crete practiced the religio-spiritual belief system known as *zar/bori* and celebrated a yearly ‘festival’ in May that appears to mirror Izmir’s festival in many respects.³ A Greek-speaking Afro-Cretan population survived on Crete

up to their forced migration to what was deemed their ‘rightful’ home in modern Turkey’s Aegean coastal cities in the 1920s.

Historians studying trans-Saharan Africans in the Ottoman Empire face significant challenges, many of which have been discussed elsewhere.⁴ The most critical is that traditional state sources, such as official demographic records (*salnames* and *rebbers*), categorize people by religion and not ethnicity. As trans-Saharan African slaves were for the most part acquired by Muslim owners, they were thus considered nominally Muslim and as a result they were, in the words of Esma Durugönül, statistically “non-existent.”⁵ In this sense, a search in the Ottoman archives for demographic data in which they appear can be not only time-consuming, but also unfruitful.⁶

The language used to describe trans-Saharan Africans in Ottoman (and modern) Turkish leads to additional problems. For example, the word *arap* is used to mean both ‘Arab,’ in the modern English sense of the word, and Muslim trans-Saharan African. In certain contexts, then, understanding the specific reference in the sources can be very difficult. With further research in the documentary sources it may be possible to tease out the contemporary meanings of these terms from the context.⁷

As a counterbalance to the silence in these sources, eyewitness accounts by European and Ottoman travelers, government officials, and foreign (generally British) documents can prove useful. The British and French push for the abolition of African slavery, combined with the spreading of Victorian notions of race, meant that these observers were quite keen to record any evidence of a trans-Saharan African presence wherever they went. However, the terms they employed, such as black, Negro, African, North African, or Arab, are often as problematic and unclear as those in the Ottoman sources. As such, oral histories are invaluable for illuminating an alternative, slave-centered, point of view.

Nationalism has also rendered the study of trans-Saharan Africans in the late Ottoman Empire more difficult. The history of the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century is presented as that of south-eastern Europe and western Anatolia, with a linear progression towards the rise of Atatürk and the modern Turkish Republic.⁸ While it is true that this approach is now being discarded, it has influenced how we understand who constituted the late Ottoman Empire’s population. As Çağlar Keyder notes:

Turkish nationalist historiography is distinguished by the enormity of the effort to negate the previous existence of non-Turkish populations in the land that eventually became Turkey. . . . A concept of Turkishness was constructed in an attempt to present the remaining population as homogeneous, and it glossed over any real diversity.⁹

Inasmuch as the trans-Saharan Africans of the late Ottoman Empire are disruptive to Turkish nationalist history—as well as the nationalist histories of all other Ottoman successor states—they represent a “fragment of the nation” as described by Partha Chatterjee.¹⁰ Writing their history requires the historian to work against these powerful narratives that have obscured perceptions of the history of the late Ottoman Empire.

For the trans-Saharan Africans of Crete, very little has been produced in the historiography of the Ottoman Empire and little is known of their history.¹¹ The first mention of an African presence on Crete comes from Ethiopicist Richard Pankhurst who argued that the population there was significant enough to “justify examination.”¹² This article and the travalogues it mentions, along with others Pankhurst did not use, form an important part of the evidence used here. I also draw upon Charidimos Papadakis’ recently published but unused work, *Oι Αφρικανοί στην Κρήτη Χαλικούτες* [*The Africans on Crete: Halikoutis*]. A lawyer by trade, Papadakis has brought together a number of Greek sources and eyewitness accounts about Africans on Crete.¹³ I have also consulted British consular documents from Crete.

Historical Overview of Ottoman Crete

Save for the work of Molly Greene, Crete has received relatively limited attention by historians of the Ottoman period.¹⁴ Greene sees the year 1770 as a turning point in the island’s history, as from this point onward Christians began guerilla attacks from the mountains on their Muslim rulers in the cities.¹⁵ Christians on Crete rose again in arms against Ottoman rule in the 1820s, as part of the larger movement which historians now call the Greek War of Independence.¹⁶ With military resources spread too thin, the central Ottoman government in Istanbul asked Mehmet Ali (also known as Muhammad Ali in the Arabic-speaking world), the powerful ruler of Ottoman Egypt, to send troops to suppress the growing insurrection. After taking the island in 1824, it was “formally confided to him” in 1830.¹⁷ Following a ten-year period of Egyptian rule, Crete

was returned to direct Ottoman rule in 1840.¹⁸ Instability and inter-communal violence plagued Crete for the remainder of the century.

Outside of Crete, the central authorities were occupied by the all-encompassing re-ordering known as the Tanzimat and the fallout of the Crimean War with Russia (1853–56) that included the settling of Muslim refugees from the Crimea. Unable to devote any resources to putting down the rebellions on Crete, the government implemented policies to further placate its Christian inhabitants.¹⁹ One such attempt was the complex agreement signed in 1878 known as the Pact of Halepa, whereby Crete was accorded a degree of autonomy under a Christian governor.²⁰ This agreement failed to quell the growing insurgency and political movement against Ottoman rule that included calls by some Christians for Crete to join with the now independent Kingdom of Greece (*enosis*).²¹ The end of effective Ottoman rule on Crete came in 1898 when an international committee appointed a Greek prince as the head of a semi-autonomous Crete. This lasted until 1913 when the island was joined with Greece.²²

One key social aspect of Crete's population under the Ottomans was its religious make-up. At the time of the Ottoman conquest in 1669, the island was almost entirely Christian. As a result of conversion to Islam (see below), the island attained a Muslim majority in the mid-eighteenth century, accounting for two-thirds of the island's roughly three hundred thousand inhabitants. However from 1821 onward, with the growth of political, economic, and social instability as a result of Christian rebellions, the Muslim population declined dramatically.²³ By the mid-1830s, Muslims were in the minority. According to official Ottoman population statistics for 1881, the total population was estimated at 279,192, with Christians making up 204,781, Muslims 73,487, and Jews 646.²⁴ By 1900, when Ottoman rule had all but ceased, Crete had 303,553 inhabitants, with 269,319 Christians, 33,496 Muslims, and 728 Jews.²⁵ In 1926 Crete's Muslim population was forced to leave the island as part of the Greek-Turkish population exchange.²⁶

Likely because of its geographical position in the center of the eastern Mediterranean, Crete did not receive a significant number of Muslim migrants as did other Ottoman Anatolian and Balkan provinces prior to the nineteenth century.²⁷ Conversion to Islam was thus one of the defining characteristics of the Cretan people in the Ottoman period.²⁸ Greene argues this was a result of post-conquest social dislocation and weakened

religious institutions, along with the career opportunities afforded by the Ottoman army for Muslims.²⁹ Muslims tended to be more connected to the Ottoman administration in the cities, while Christians generally lived in the countryside.

The other defining characteristic of Crete in the Ottoman period relates to language. Despite converting to Islam, the Muslim population continued to speak Greek. Thus the island was unified in language and common heritage, but at the same time divided by religion.³⁰

This is the standard portrait of the history of Crete, one in which the population is described as having been composed of Christian and Muslim, or ‘Greek’ and ‘Turkish’ elements. Although the population in this period also included trans-Saharan Africans, the ‘normalization’ of Crete’s history undertaken by Greek and Turkish nationalist historians rendered them invisible.

The Coming of Africans to Crete

Given the proximity of Crete to the African continent (roughly 185 miles), there is of course a long history of interaction between them.³¹ However, it appears that it was only in the Ottoman period that a sustained trans-Saharan presence developed on Crete. As elsewhere in the empire, the majority of trans-Saharan Africans on Crete were slaves, descendants of slaves, or recently manumitted. Without any concrete data, it can be assumed that, as elsewhere in the empire, approximately two-thirds of the enslaved were women. Originating in northern Nigeria, the lands around Lake Chad, or Darfur, and southern Sudan they were brought to Crete as domestic servants or to become wives.³²

Crete also played a vital role in the slave trade to cities in the northern empire such as Istanbul, Salonica, and Izmir. It was a natural mid-way point for ships leaving North African ports such as Tripoli and Benghazi. As foreign pressure began to slowly shut down the trade through the more traditional routes in the mid-nineteenth century, such as up the Nile Valley and the Red Sea, traffic on this trans-Saharan route that included Crete actually increased.³³

It is also commonly believed that many trans-Saharan African men arrived on Crete during the period of Egyptian control of the island (1822–40). While Papadakis notes that there is still no archival evidence to indicate as much, the concurrent increase in the flow of trans-Saharan Africans up the Nile Valley and use of Sudanese soldiers in the new

Egyptian army, especially in its campaigns on the Greek peninsula, supports this assumption.³⁴ They may also have been brought to Crete as laborers involved in Mehmet Ali's infrastructure development programs there.³⁵ Quite tellingly, it is in this period that trans-Saharan Africans begin being mentioned in Western travelogues.³⁶ As British sojourner Mary Walker suggests, they may simply have stayed on Crete past the period of the Egyptian administration of the island.³⁷

There are only a few contemporary indications of the number of African slaves (thus not including free Africans) on Crete. In 1817, F.W. Sieber recalls seeing a ship arrive in the port of Chania (Ottoman Khanya) from Tripoli, "with nearly fifty Negro slaves on board, who were soon landed, and sold singly to Turkish inhabitants as house servants."³⁸ In 1834, British traveler Robert Pashley records being attended by "two negro slaves" at breakfast. He further says that:

in the principal towns there are slaves in the families of every Mohammedan gentleman. The price of labour is every-where very high, the difficulty of obtaining labourers in many cases amounting to an absolute impossibility, and the markets of Khania and Maegalo-Kastron are regularly furnished with human flesh as they are with bullocks, the supply of both being chiefly drawn from the same place, Benghazi.³⁹

In his *Report on Egypt and Candia*, John Bowring estimated that in 1840 they numbered two thousand.⁴⁰ In 1845, French traveler Victor Raulin recorded in his diary that "the rich Mussulmans possessed a certain number of African slaves . . . [while freed Africans formed] kinds of corporations: the women were laundresses, and the men, owners of donkeys."⁴¹ Upon his arrival in Halepa (near Chania) from the Greek mainland, English artist and author Edward Lear also noted in his journal for Tuesday, 12 April 1864: "The Cretans are vastly picturesque: great number of blacks, male and female."⁴²

By all accounts, the largest concentration of (both enslaved and free) trans-Saharan Africans was in and around the city of Chania, the administrative capital of Crete, located on the northwestern shore of the island.⁴³ On his way to Chania in 1864, Edward Lear remarked how "the queer village of the blacks, with houses in a cluster, was pretty."⁴⁴ A year later, British traveler T.A.B. Spratt also recorded seeing outside Chania's city walls a "perfect little African community."⁴⁵

Another portion of Chania's trans-Saharan African population appears to have also been brought to the city by the British navy in their anti-slaving efforts that began in mid-century and increased following the official abolition of the slave trade in the Ottoman Empire in 1857.⁴⁶ Vessels from North Africa laden with slaves that the British intercepted on the high seas were often brought to Chania where the slaves were landed and manumitted.⁴⁷ According to the British consul in Chania in 1858, the local governor "exerted himself strenuously" in cooperating with the British to put a stop to the African slave trade in his waters and that the "whole black population of the isle" looked up to him "as their best friend and benefactor."⁴⁸ In 1885, another British consul even argued that trans-Saharan Africans rescued on the high-seas would be better off being put with "their African countrymen established [in Chania]," reflecting the large number of trans-Saharan Africans already in the city.⁴⁹ According to Walker, who visited Chania in 1886, "industrious" trans-Saharan Africans had "planted their village on the sea-shore" at the foot of the city's fort. Their settlement was "composed of a small, square, flat roofed houses" which had a small mosque at its center.⁵⁰

Papadakis also points out that in the mid-nineteenth century, the Ottoman state began moving Muslims to Crete in an attempt to compensate for those who had fled the island. Many were moved from nearby Tripoli and Benghazi.⁵¹ It appears this group spoke Arabic and lived separately from the main African quarter. It is unclear how many of these were trans-Saharan Africans as many were native North Africans (in the modern English sense of the term). Further research on this topic is needed to fully understand the differences between the two African groups.⁵² Their unknown origins and identity complicates our understanding of the trans-Saharan African experience in Chania. At times, it is nearly impossible to understand whether the sources are referring to the emancipated trans-Saharan or those included in this process (which may include trans-Saharan Africans as well). Nonetheless, we may conclude that nineteenth-century Chania had a sizeable African population. This meant that there was greater opportunity for them to engage in cultural expression based on African-rooted ideas and practices.⁵³

Social Life: Zar/Bori and the May Festivals

The two most prominent aspects of African social life on Crete are the practice of *zar/bori* and the May festivals. Examining these two practices

is crucial to understanding the lives of enslaved and freed trans-Saharan Africans in the northern tier of the Ottoman Empire. The maintenance of unique practices, many elements of which came with them from Africa, is critical to understanding their experience, and raises questions about the process of their integration into the island's cultural fabric.

As has been established elsewhere, women inhabiting large parts of northern and eastern Africa practiced a religio-spiritual belief system known as *zar/bori* from at least the early nineteenth century.⁵⁴ Toledano and others have noted that these practices were brought along with enslaved trans-Saharan Africans into the Ottoman heartland.⁵⁵ However, Toledano's study focused on *zar/bori* practitioners in Istanbul and Izmir. As the trans-Saharan African slaves sent to Istanbul and Izmir came from the same sources as those on Crete, it is likely that they too practiced *zar/bori*. Perhaps because of the gendered nature of the practice, and the fact that most of the travelogues consulted are written by foreign men who would have had the least possible access to the *zar/bori* ceremonies, the evidence on this subject is rather limited.⁵⁶ Indeed, Abd al-Rahman Ismail notes for the *zar/bori* in Egypt, the practitioners "object to the presence of men or even boys" (although it is known men were often involved as music makers).⁵⁷ However, one female 'insider' has left us a detailed description of a ceremony involving trans-Saharan African women on Crete which is consistent with accounts of *zar/bori* elsewhere. While admitting to never encountering a *zar/bori* priestess (*godya*) herself, Ottoman writer Leyla Saz was witness to an ecstatic trance (the core component of the *zar/bori* ceremony) in Chania in her youth, where her father, Hekim Ismail Pasha, was governor from 1861 to 1866:

One night we were all sitting and talking with my father. Suddenly, a strange rumbling noise began to come from downstairs. Screams, laughter and talking! I jumped up to learn what was happening. They told me a black girl by the name of Hoş Kadem was having a baba.⁵⁸ Upon asking for permission from my father to go and see, he said to me "If you want you can go and see, but it's not worth seeing. They are lies and deceptions."

This nervous crisis began like this: deep noises came out with the clanging of copper pot lids on the table. This black girl who like all the others had sensitive nerves became irritated with these noises and cried out pleading: "Don't make all these noises, if not I'm going to have my *baba*."

Whereupon, the devilish and mischievous girls went right up in front of her and ridiculed her and made fun of her. On top of that, they prodded the top of her head, which is the most objectionable thing you can do to a black girl. On one side, some continued to make noises, they threw into the charcoal brazier fresh fragrant herbs and anything they could get their hands on. As a result of the unpleasant and thick smoke, along with these hellish noises, the girl became all the more mad and upset. When I came upon them, I found her jumping up and down on her knees and hitting the floor with her hands. I shooed them away and shut them up.

At this point, the black girl began to utter with an unusual voice, some strange and incomprehensible words, resembling a bird chirping. It was said that she was talking with an old and strong spirit named Ruku Hanım. We understood the spirit had a weakness for the color red. I had on my head a red ribbon. Upon seeing this, the girl suddenly jumped right at me in order to snatch it. I was so scared. However, right then she said to me in her black accent, “don’t be scared, I love you,” in an attempt to calm me down.

At the same time, she was voicing the requests of Rukuş Hanım. One of her requests was a shiny red dress. Although one of the girls had a red dress and brought it to her, she shoved it away disparagingly and said: “I have no need for your rags, take this old dress away from me and stuff it up your ass!” she said. Rukuş wanted a new and beautiful one. After Rukuş, then the spirit of her brother Yavru Bey came to Hoş Kadem. Unbelievably, the black girl apparently was under his control! This time, her voice resembled that of a young man. She put her fingers atop her lips in order to twist the moustache she believed she had. Later, she came under the influence of an old and bearded uncle.⁵⁹ In this manner, she tried to deceive us for a long time by acting friendly and times and at others, having a dangerous attitude.

Those who believed in this type of magic asserted that when the spirits found someone they thought appropriate for themselves, they would hold that person completely under their influence and would not let them talk to anyone. In those times, people were very gullible and naïve. Moreover, there were even women who believed that their child was from Yavru Bey, Rukuş Hanım’s brother.⁶⁰

The details of this account afford us many clues to its origins in *zar/bori*. *Godya* is consistent with the name for the head female priestess in the *zar/bori* elsewhere. For example, it was also *godya* in Izmir,⁶¹

and *kudya* in Egypt.⁶² As Toledano has noted, the phrase ‘to have a *baba*’ became so synonymous with Africans that it appears in the Redhouse Ottoman-Turkish dictionary as a word that means an African having a ‘nervous fit’.⁶³ The actions of the women under possession or in a trance align with Janice Boddy’s characterization of *zar/bori*: “smoking, wanton dancing, flailing about, burping, hiccupping, drinking blood and alcohol, wearing male clothing, publicly threatening men with swords, speaking loudly lacking due regard for etiquette.”⁶⁴ As spirit possession is the key component of *zar/bori*, it is no surprise then that Saz witnessed possession by at least three spirits. For the *zar/bori* in Egypt, the spirits often demanded valuable pieces of clothing (the spirit’s name, *Rukuş*, is likely derived from the Turkish word *rüküs* meaning comically dressed).⁶⁵ The color red is also significant. In some places, *zar/bori* spirits are grouped into colors, the two most prominent being red and black. By bringing ‘Rukuş Hanım’ a red dress, they were attempting to placate the spirit, one of the unique features of *zar/bori*.⁶⁶ As Toledano has argued, Yavru Bey “keeps coming up in reports about *zar/bori* rituals in both Istanbul and Izmir.”⁶⁷ And finally, the notion that some of these women were having their children as a result of being impregnated by the spirit of Yavru Bey is consistent with the concept in *zar/bori* that those possessed are ‘mounted’ by the spirits. The possessed are sometimes called ‘brides’.⁶⁸

Thus, despite our having only one detailed account available, Saz’s description is so comprehensive that we are able to conclude that *zar/bori* did indeed exist in Chania. Furthermore, as the festival in Izmir was contingent upon the presence of the *godya* (see below) and because it is comparable with the festival in Chania, it is thus even more likely that *zar/bori* was practiced in Chania.⁶⁹

One key aspect of trans-Saharan African socio-cultural life in the Ottoman Empire appears to have been yearly festivals.⁷⁰ There is a great deal of information about them, largely because as public events, they were witnessed by outsiders. By all accounts they were events specific to trans-Saharan African communities. A comparison of Chania’s and Izmir’s festivals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reveals striking similarities, and thus, along with *zar/bori*, enables us to begin envisioning a regional post-emancipation trans-Saharan African culture.

In Izmir, 8 May was the beginning of the festivities, called *Dellâl Bayramı* or Declaration Festival.⁷¹ On this day a select number of community members, including a person wearing white clothes and a turban

who was called *kabakçı başı*, or head gourd-player, walked in the street playing his gourd instrument to announce the upcoming festival. In front of him marched the *godya* with two escorts. They are reported to have paraded through the streets, especially in Izmir's African neighborhoods of Tamaşalık and İkiçeşme, proclaiming the approach of the *Dana Bayramı* or 'Calf Festival' in a week's time. They also collected donations, which were used, presumably, to cover the costs of the festival. Even municipal government officials greeted them and gave donations. The lead party also sang songs in what were reported to be African languages. When the parade finished, members of the trans-Saharan African community gathered atop Kadifekale, the highest point in Izmir, where they joined together in announcing the second festival the following week, *Peştamal Bayramı*, or 'Cloth Festival,' so called as the participants wore white towels as part of the celebrations. Following the announcement they spent the rest of the day atop Kadifekale drinking tea and socializing.⁷²

On the following Friday, *Peştamal Bayramı*, African participants once again congregated atop Kadifekale. There, they pooled all the donations and went off later that day to purchase a desirable calf. Upon returning with the calf to Kadifekale, it was decorated with items including pink cloth. They then paraded with the calf through the streets of Izmir while once again playing gourd instruments, drums, ringing bells, and dancing. In some years, it was reported that each neighborhood decorated a calf. Thus the festival took on a competitive tone as each neighborhood sought to outdo the other. At times, this even resulted in hurling insults about a rival neighborhood's calf.⁷³

On the Friday of the following week came the final part of the festival, *Dana Bayramı* proper. It was on this day that the celebrations reached their climax. Waking up at dawn and dressed in their best clothes, one group of African participants met in Yusuf Dede cemetery to prepare for a sacrifice, while the others once again congregated atop Kadifekale to decorate the calf and parade it through the city, this time to the cemetery. Observers recall seeing people from all backgrounds standing on rooftops, climbing up trees, and packing the streets to see the parade. Once at the cemetery, the *godya* performed the sacrifice. The participants then each marked themselves with blood from the calf. With the ceremony completed, they cooked the calf in a large pot, along with rice and chickpeas. After this feast, there was dancing and merrymaking for the remainder of the night.⁷⁴

According to Greek and other European eyewitness reports, the May festivities in Chania on Crete were also held on three days. The first of May marked the first celebration. It is unknown if it had a particular name other than ‘the First of May,’ but this day was likely the biggest of the three. The festival took place in the African quarter of the city just outside the walls. Celebrants gathered at the tomb of Saint Bilal, wearing their best clothes, which included red cloth and special jewelry. The day began with a large parade of African celebrants, led in some years by a certain Ali Koko, who sang as he marched. Following him was a woman known as Abla Nuriye who danced non-stop (possibly a *godya?*), with a gender-divided procession following them through the town. Much dancing, singing, and playing of musical instruments such as cymbals took place. Women who were unable to take part climbed atop the city’s main gates to watch.⁷⁵ Following the parade, the celebrants gathered on the beach near their houses to put small vessels filled with oil in the sea in the direction of Mecca, presumably sent off with wishes. They then sacrificed numerous rams that were given to them by the *beys* and *ağas* (local Muslim notables).⁷⁶ Afterward, they prepared a feast that included the meat of the rams, rice, special pastries, and drinks. Following the meal, they danced, with young men apparently trying to show off for the young women.⁷⁷

The celebration continued on 14 or 15 May, and was known as Saint Zeyti Bilal Day (it is unclear if he is the same Saint Bilal mentioned above). This day was also celebrated outside the city walls near the tomb of Saint Zeyti Bilal. The ceremonies included placing gifts of incense and candles on the tomb. At the end, they sacrificed a ram, which was cooked and eaten with rice, after which they would once again dance and socialize.⁷⁸

The final day of the festival was on 22 or 27 May, which was called Saint Gazi Mustafa Day.⁷⁹ Gazi Mustafa was famous because he reportedly died in the capture of the city by the Ottomans in 1645. Like the other festivals, it was held outside the walls near the beach, at his tomb and, like Saint Zeyti Bilal Day one week earlier, gifts of incense and candles were offered. In addition to sacrificing numerous rams the celebrants also cooked a special dish made of rice and sugar.⁸⁰ Dressed in their best clothes, the trans-Saharan Africans engaged in a variety of different types of dances, involving drums and batons. Raulin recalls seeing this event on 27 May 1845 and mentions seeing refreshment vendors and

event tents.⁸¹ Nineteen years later to the day, Lear recalled seeing that the “blacks and Arabs [North Africans?] were having a fête.”⁸²

There are some obvious similarities between the trans-Saharan African celebrations of Izmir and Chania. Both festivals took place over three separate days, involved music, dancing, singing, festive clothing, parading, performing sacrifices in cemeteries or near tombs, and cooking and eating communal meals.

The origins of this May festival are unclear and have been the source of much conjecture. It has been likened to a variety of celebrations, such as Santería in Cuba, Candomblé in Brazil, pre-Christian Greek practices such as the Saturnalia, and the Alevi/Turkic Hidrellez festival.⁸³ There is, as of yet, no systematic study that deals with this question in depth and thus it remains open for future research. The prominent position of a woman as the leader of the parade indicates this festival is likely connected to the *zar/bori* beliefs of the trans-Saharan African community. Indeed, it has been documented elsewhere that public *zar/bori* performances were often seen by outsiders simply as festivals.⁸⁴

In Toledano’s study of trans-Saharan Africans in Istanbul and Izmir, he refers to the process of fusion and mixing of imported African and local Muslim elements as “cultural creolization.” That is, “the process by which enslaved Africans . . . retained ingredients of their origin-cultures, these ingredients were fused with local-culture components, and the resulting hybrid-type cultures were disseminated in Ottoman societies.”⁸⁵ While Toledano has broken new ground for historians looking at the culture of trans-Saharan Africans in the northern tier of the Ottoman Empire, the term creolization is problematic.

As folklorists Robert Baron and Anna C. Cara point out, historically ‘creolization’ was a concept formulated in a colonial context. In the past, creolization has “been viewed as manifestations of fragmentation and degeneration, thereby suffering in comparison to the supposedly fully formed, reified, historically sanctioned expressions of a colonial or ‘western’ elite.”⁸⁶ Thus, ‘creolization’ as a model is problematic because it has been employed to delegitimize the culture of colonized peoples. Indeed, the word ‘creole’ is only used when the two cultures mixing are marked by racial difference.⁸⁷

Despite current efforts by folklorists to reclaim the term creolization and strip it of its value judgment,⁸⁸ as a model it is still incomplete as it does not factor in power relations and markers of identity (gender,

race, class) in this process of fusion and mixing of practices. For now, the instances where this interplay between the local and imported occurred can simply be highlighted, as it is beyond the scope of this study to fully address this complicated problem. At the very least it could be said that as a ‘minority group’ the trans-Saharan Africans in Chania were under pressure to conform to some degree to the beliefs and practices of the dominant group, and not the other way around.

This interaction between local and imported traditions is seen throughout the African diaspora. For a contemporaneous example, we can look to the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé practitioners of Salvador, Brazil, who used the Catholic tradition of saint veneration to subvert state-sponsored Christianity: by praying to a Catholic saint with similar attributes to the Yoruban deity they sought to celebrate, they were able to conceal their beliefs from the Church, which had deemed them heretical.⁸⁹ There, the fusion of African-based practices and those of the local Catholic context ultimately created a new, uniquely Salvadorian, religious practice.

Similarly, the incorporation of practices that are ambiguous in origin in the trans-Saharan Africans’ festivals at Chania demonstrates the balance of traditions between their past and present. In utilizing practices that straddled both imported African and local Muslim traditions, the trans-Saharan Africans were actively negotiating their new circumstances. Examples of this process in Chania include saint veneration and animal sacrifice.

As a hero of the Ottoman conquest of the city, Saint Gazi Mustafa was a part of local Muslim tradition. Indeed, it is known that his tomb was a site of reverence.⁹⁰ Much like the Africans in Salvador, Brazil, the Africans in Chania could have been concealing their worship of another figure or deity through Saint Gazi Mustafa. Perhaps the Africans were substituting Saint Gazi Mustafa for a saint they had worshipped previously in Africa, as it is well known that saint veneration was also practiced by trans-Saharan Africans in North Africa.⁹¹

It is likely that the Saint Bilal that the Africans celebrated was Bilal, the first muezzin of Islam and a trans-Saharan African himself. Bilal has long played an important role in African Muslim traditions. Indeed, the veneration of Bilal by trans-Saharan Africans in North Africa is viewed by Sophie Ferichou as a way of legitimizing their non-Muslim practices in a Muslim *milieu*.⁹²

The slaughter of animals such as sheep is another practice that is both of imported African and local Muslim tradition. Certainly, animal sacrifice is central to Eid al-Adha (Festival of the Sacrifice) in Islam. Thus, as with saint veneration, sacrifice was another practice the Africans of Chania used that was part of theirs and the local Muslim community's traditions. With further research, the motivations for this mixing and interplay between traditions in the Africans' festivals will no doubt be uncovered.

Despite their efforts to negotiate the local Muslim context, it was circumstances out of their control that prematurely halted this process on Crete. Indeed, their integration into the local Muslim community meant that the local Christians began to push for their removal from the island as well.

The End of the African Presence on Crete

As Christian rebellion and instability grew in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Africans, like all Muslims of Crete, began to leave the island. Crete's *de facto* independence in 1898 created a large wave of Muslim emigration, most heading for Istanbul, Izmir, Bodrum, and Antalya. Some also went to state-sponsored settlements in what is now Syria and Lebanon.⁹³ Those who did not leave then were, as Muslims, subject to the Greek and Turkish Population Exchange treaty that was signed in Lausanne, Switzerland in January 1923. Backed by the new nationalist governments of Greece and Turkey, this agreement sought to move each new country's 'nationals' to their respective countries (Muslims to Turkey and Orthodox Christians to Greece).⁹⁴ Unlike Muslims leaving the Balkans, those on Crete had three years to prepare for their departure. As a result they were much better organized when it was time to leave in 1926: some leaving Crete likened the boat ride to a cruise. By the time of the exchange in 1926, an estimated twenty to thirty thousand Muslims remained on Crete.⁹⁵ They were first brought to Cunda Island (Alibey Island) just outside of Ayvalik, on Turkey's Aegean coast, and once the quarantine process was complete, they were given land and settled by the state, generally in one of Turkey's Aegean provinces.⁹⁶ Many moved into the urban centers of Ayvalik and Izmir in search of work. Some never left Cunda, as it is still today inhabited by a large number of Muslims from Crete, where their unique identity and use of the Greek language continues.⁹⁷

But what of the trans-Saharan Africans? From the mid-nineteenth century onward, many, including those recently rescued and emancipated by the British, were sent to Izmir as a result of a state-sponsored relocation program, which has been discussed in detail elsewhere.⁹⁸ Once in Izmir, the state planned to enrol the men in vocational schools, artisan battalions, and military bands, while women were to be placed in ‘appropriate households’ as salaried domestic servants.⁹⁹ Despite it not being clear how many actually went through the Izmir shelter, it is known that by 1893, Ottoman cities far and wide had taken literally the sultan’s orders to send “as many as possible” emancipated slaves to Izmir. Some trans-Saharan Africans that were sent were already married, had started new lives, had been integrated into households, and were not in need of being sent to a shelter. Thus in 1893 the sultan sent out another order clarifying that he only wanted unmarried, recently manumitted slaves to be moved to Izmir.¹⁰⁰ This process is perhaps indicative of how the state and slave owners viewed trans-Saharan Africans following emancipation: as moveable entities whose own interests were secondary to the needs of others.

Another key aspect of this plan took place in the countryside outside Izmir. In order to provide for the growing needs of this rapidly developing agricultural region, a plan was devised in which the government would marry former slaves now under its control. In some instances, it also provided farming tools and constructed houses for them. Some trans-Saharan African women were also sent on their own to work as domestic servants in the households of wealthy farmers.¹⁰¹

During the intercommunal warfare of the mid 1890s in and around Chania, coinciding with the Greek-Ottoman war taking place in the Balkans, Africans (both trans-Saharan and North Africans) were considered a violent and dangerous group by the British and their local Christian allies. In 1896 the Christian community in Chania presented a list of demands to ensure the return to stability on the island. Article XI states:

All Africans who have taken part in the late murders, plunders, &c., in, or in the vicinity of [Chania], are to be exiled from the island; also those who do not possess real property to the value of 10,000 piastres, and no more emigrants from Africa are to be admitted into the island.¹⁰²

Ottoman authorities from Istanbul were apparently no less disparaging in their remarks. In a letter sent by the ‘Turkish Ambassador’ at Chania to the British consul there in the spring of 1896, he is recorded as saying that the trouble “had been caused by men of Benghazi, who acted as porters to and from the town, and whom he described as uncivilized Arabs, very scantily clothed.”¹⁰³

However, local Muslim authorities in Chania responded to the Christians’ demands in a lengthy letter sent to the British consul, defending the Africans. In it, they argued that the Africans were “born here and have become our fellow citizens” and asserted that they were productive members of Chania’s populace as they “readily engage in all sorts of commerce and industry.” And finally, they “possess an equal title with us to [our] civil rights, and cannot be looked upon as other than real natives of the country.”¹⁰⁴ The local authorities had good reason to defend the actions of the Africans. As more and more Muslims fled Crete as a result of instability, Muslims were quickly becoming a minority. Without the African population, the demographic imbalance would further swing towards the Christians and thus the local assembly members would have a diminished influence and role in Chania. Furthermore, the island’s union with Greece would become more likely.

According to Papadakis, the removal of the Africans from Chania and the destruction of their quarter was eventually approved by local authorities, who were supported in this by the Western powers. Papadakis singles out one local Christian official, who on 30 September 1901 seized the opportunity afforded to him by the slow transfer of authority from Ottoman to local rule to order the demolition of the African quarter. Local newspapers reported that the police uncovered weapons such as swords and other bladed objects while they were setting the Africans’ houses on fire. It is likely that the pro-government newspaper was seeking to legitimize the actions of the authorities by presenting them as a threat to order and law. Papadakis suggests local Christians may also have destroyed the Africans’ homes in retribution for a fire that damaged the Christian quarter that had been blamed on them (without any evidence).¹⁰⁵

Robert Holland argues that violence against Muslims (African or otherwise) by the Christians on Crete at this time caused the British authorities little concern, and indeed they even let it happen. Furthermore, he argues, “it was the emigration of Muslims—providing it took place gradually and without extensive violence—that promised finally to

solve the Cretan matter invisibly without requiring [Lord Lansdowne, the then British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs] and colleagues to make awkward political decisions themselves.”¹⁰⁶ Thus the British did not intervene in the razing of the African community because they believed it was necessary to ensure security for the Christian inhabitants and to further coerce Africans and other Muslims to leave the island. Immediately following the destruction of their homes, many Africans gathered in the streets outside the local parliament and the offices of European consuls in protest, but to no avail. They also planned to write a letter of complaint to the sultan in Istanbul.¹⁰⁷

The police crackdown on Africans in Chania continued until at least 1908, with street children being rounded up and ‘deported,’ perhaps back to Africa as the Christian community leaders had demanded years earlier. Some managed to survive in Chania beyond this period, likely by staying with their former owners or living outside of Chania in the countryside (see below).¹⁰⁸

As Greece and Turkey considered the Africans on Crete to be officially Muslim, those who remained after these events were subject to the Greek-Turkish population exchange. This event marks the dissolution of the African communities on Crete. It also resulted in the strange situation whereby Greek-speaking Afro-Cretans became ‘nationals’ of the new Turkish Republic.

Mustafa Olpak, an Afro-Turk, has written a history of his family’s past as slaves on Crete, including details of their departure to Turkey following emancipation. In preparation for their departure, Olpak says his family’s owners sold a female member of his extended family to a family in Istanbul in 1923. Three years later his family’s owners formally manumitted his remaining relatives. He says they were told that they were free and could do what they wished, but it was suggested that they might best head to Ayvalık. They believed Olpak’s family would not be so out of place in Ayvalık as many Muslim Cretans were settling there. Olpak says Ahmet, the head of the family, was very upset at their decision to free him and his family at that moment. He had lived and worked with them his whole life and now that they were cut loose, the security and stability that enslavement offered was gone: they were ‘free’ but extremely vulnerable. With no money, no job, and no future on Crete, Olpak says that his family did not know what to do. Unable to afford a ticket to board a boat headed for Ayvalık and carrying a newborn child

(Olpak's mother), they managed to sneak aboard a ship with the infant concealed in a carpet.¹⁰⁹ On Cunda, they were registered as citizens of the new Turkish Republic. After the quarantine period, they were sent to a district outside of Ayvalik where they were given a parcel of land, almost certainly vacated by 'Greeks' who were also victims of the population exchange, with some olive trees on it. (Many of those coming from Crete brought their olive production skills, techniques and business with them to Ayvalik.)¹¹⁰ A few olive trees were not enough to support a family and thus Ahmet began to look for work. His inability to speak Turkish, lack of education in a skilled trade and, most importantly, lack of a social network through which to find work meant that finding employment was extremely challenging. (Olpak later details the problems his mother encountered at elementary school, including being excluded by the other children because of her appearance, and his family's move to Izmir in search of work.)¹¹¹

Papadakis has recorded the oral histories of three Afro-Cretans who lived into the twentieth century. Salis Chelidonakis (born 1884 in Chania, died 1967) is the most celebrated of them. He worked as a fisherman and when he retired he was given a pension that he reportedly gave away to others less fortunate than himself. He is also credited with saving five soldiers at sea. His sister Ayesha also stayed on Crete beyond 1923, and later moved to Egypt in the late 1950s. Salis' mother's name is recorded as 'Arife,' meaning expert or master (*arifa*) in Arabic, which was also another name for a *godya* or *zar/bori* priestess.¹¹²

Abla Nuriye Marmaraki worked selling nuts in the market in her later life. As mentioned above, she played an important role in the parade on the First of May and, as I have suggested, was likely involved in *zar/bori*. She was reportedly like a sister to Salis. She had a daughter named Hatice and a grandson named Sait. Her sister, *Gül*, had a daughter named Salma. Sait and Salma reportedly married and after a time, moved to Izmir. When Abla Nuriye died, Salis was said to be the last remaining trans-Saharan African in Chania, and as a result of not being able to find an imam, Salis was given the duties of performing the last rites and leading her funeral. Perhaps Salis and Abla Nuriye had been able to circumvent the population exchange by being attached to a Christian household.¹¹³

Ali Koko attempted to stay on Crete beyond the population exchange but ultimately failed. He was a large man who never wore shoes and worked in the docks until 1926. As mentioned above, he was a central

figure in the parade on the first of May. Koko (presumably from ‘cocoa’) was a name given to him because of his reportedly very dark skin. At the time of the population exchange, Ali did not want to leave the island. He was forced onto a boat. As the boat was leaving the port, he jumped off and attempted to swim back to land. Unfortunately, he was captured by men on the boat and taken away, likely to Ayvalik or Izmir.¹¹⁴

The movement of trans-Saharan Africans from Crete to Izmir, whether directly through government relocation programs or indirectly from Ayvalik in search of work, raises questions about the intermingling of Afro-Cretans and local Afro-Turks in Izmir. Certainly the arrival of trans-Saharan Africans from Crete helps to explain Izmir’s still-extant Afro-Turk population, and suggests a continuation of the Calf Festival in Izmir, despite not being reported in the newspapers beyond 1922.¹¹⁵

Conclusion

In this preliminary study, I have aimed to describe the trans-Saharan African presence on Crete in the nineteenth century. Despite their sizeable numbers in Chania, they have, for a variety of reasons, been largely overlooked by historians. They arrived on the island mainly as a result of enslavement and eventually formed a separate quarter outside the city walls. There, they practiced the religio-spiritual belief system known as *zar/bori* and celebrated festivals in the month of May, which resembled those of Izmir’s trans-Saharan African community. The end of their presence in Chania and indeed on Crete came as a result of actions from others seemingly unconcerned with the lives the Afro-Cretans had created for themselves there. The Ottoman state relocated some emancipated trans-Saharan Africans to Izmir and its environs. Greek nationalist forces harassed and deported Africans following the destruction of their homes. Save for a handful, those who survived this process were moved from the island in 1926 to Turkey’s Aegean coast as part of the Greek-Turkish population exchange.

As I have emphasized throughout, some aspects of the history of trans-Saharan Africans on Crete remain unclear and require further research. These include problems of terminology, the movement of trans-Saharan Africans to Crete in the period of Egyptian control, and the process by which African practices mixed and fused with local Muslim ones in Chania. Additionally, the economic activities of emancipated Africans on Crete and the integration of Afro-Cretans into modern Turkey deserve study.

Notes

- 1 Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 39.
- 2 For example: Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*; Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*.
- 3 I am adopting the terminology of I.M. Lewis in using both *zar* and *bori* together due to their overwhelming similarities and functions. See Lewis, “Introduction: Zar in Context,” 1–16.
- 4 For example, see Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition*, ix–x; Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, xvii–xix; Hunwick and Powell, *African Diaspora*, ix–xxiv.
- 5 Durugönül, “Invisibility of the Turks,” 289.
- 6 A major exception being the certificates of manumission issued by Ottoman authorities that often indicated country of origin; see Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 118–27. Research in Crete’s Sharia court records will be crucial to overcoming this problem. See Adiyeke and Adiyeke, “Newly Discovered,” 447–63.
- 7 Redhouse, *English and Turkish Lexicon*, 1292. Also see Cuno’s and Erdem’s chapters in this volume.
- 8 See, for example, Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*; Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Vol. 2, *Reform, Revolution, and Republic*. Slavery and slaves are also excluded from the authoritative Inalcik with Quataert, eds., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*. More recently, however, Quataert has acknowledged that “the presence of Africans in the northern Ottoman Empire” is among the issues that “may require further discussion at a later point”: Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700–1922*, xii.
- 9 Keyder, “Consequences,” 48–49.
- 10 Chatterjee, *Nation and its Fragments*.
- 11 Certainly, Toledano identified Crete as a location of African slaves. See Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*.
- 12 Pankhurst, “Ethiopian and Other African Slaves,” 339–44.
- 13 The term *Halikoutis* is a local Cretan term to describe the Africans on the island. Its origins and meaning are not entirely clear, as some used it to describe both the North Africans and trans-Saharan Africans on Crete, while others use it simply for the North Africans who arrived in the late nineteenth century. While Papadakis says he uses it to refer only to the North Africans on Crete and includes it in the book title, the book is about both North Africans and trans-Saharan Africans on Crete. Papadakis, Οι Αφρικανοί στην Κρήτη, 28.
- 14 Greene, *Shared World*.
- 15 Greene, *Shared World*, 206–207.
- 16 The classic account of the history of modern Greece remains Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece*.
- 17 Dodwell, *Founder of Modern Egypt*, 70–71, 242.

- 18 Detorakis, *History of Crete*, 325.
- 19 Özer, *Unutulan Girit*, 167.
- 20 For a full discussion of these events from a detailed but traditional Greek nationalist perspective, see Detorakis, *History of Crete*.
- 21 Detorakis, *History of Crete*, 357.
- 22 Detorakis, *History of Crete*, 365–65, 430. In theory, the sultan in Istanbul was still Crete’s head of state.
- 23 Adiyeke and Adiyeke, *Fethinden Kaybina Girit*, 165.
- 24 The others were Catholics, Protestants, and Armenians. Adiyeke and Adiyeke. *Fethinden Kaybina Girit*: 165–66; Nikolaou Stavrake, a member of the local administration, undertook his own demographic study in 1881 with almost identical results. See Stavrake, *Στατιστική*, 201.
- 25 Adiyeke and Adiyeke, *Fethinden Kaybina Girit*, 170.
- 26 Koufopolou, “Muslim Cretans,” 213.
- 27 See discussion below for the arrival of Muslim immigrants in the nineteenth century.
- 28 Greene, *Shared World*, 39. For detailed studies on conversion to Islam in the Ottoman world, see Minkov, *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans* and Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam*.
- 29 Greene, *Shared World*, 39–44.
- 30 Greene, *Shared World*, 39.
- 31 For the Minoan–Ancient Egyptian interactions, see Castleden, *Minoans*.
- 32 In the Muslim world, women generally made up two-thirds of the trade. For a detailed discussion of routes, see Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*.
- 33 Wright, *Trans-Saharan Slave Trade*, 125–26; Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*, 238, 240–44.
- 34 Papadakis, *Oι Αφρικανοί στην Κρήτη*, 67–69; see also Helal’s and Walz’s chapters in this volume.
- 35 Detorakis, *History of Crete*, 322; Krokidas and Gekas, “Public Health in Crete,” 35–54. According to British consular officials in Chania, these projects also included the development of the port in nearby Suda Bay, a breakwater for Chania’s main harbor and reforestation of surrounding hills. See Dodwell, *Founder of Modern Egypt*, 243.
- 36 If we can look to Cyprus from any indications of a similar process, Ronald C. Jennings has uncovered the presence of trans-Saharan Africans there since 1590: “Black Slaves,” 286–302.
- 37 Walker, *Eastern Life and Scenery*, 2: 285–86.
- 38 Sieber, *Travels in the Island of Crete*, 38.
- 39 Pashley, *Travels in Crete*, 2: 104.
- 40 Bowring, “Report on Egypt and Candia,” 157.
- 41 Raulin, *Description physique*, 1: 200, cited in Pankhurst, “Ethiopian,” 341.
- 42 Lear, *Cretan Journal*, 28.
- 43 For Heraklion, Papadakis, *Oι Αφρικανοί στην Κρήτη*, 143–45.

44 Lear, *Cretan Journal*, 28

45 Spratt, *Travels and Researches*, 2: 142–43, cited in Pankhurst, “Ethiopian,” 342.

46 Recognizing that Crete was central to the slave trade out of North Africa, the British began putting pressure on the Ottoman government to stop the trade there as early as 1855. See Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*, 108–14, 124–25.

47 For this process, Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*.

48 Great Britain, House of Commons, Parliamentary Papers, *Reports by Consul-General Longworth Respecting the Island of Crete: 1858*, 3965–I: 2, no. 2.

49 Great Britain, House of Commons, Parliamentary Papers, *Correspondence with British Representatives and Agents Abroad, and Reports from Naval Officers Relating to the Slave Trade, 1885*, C. 4776, 76, no. 74.

50 Walker, *Eastern Life and Scenery*, 285–86.

51 Papadakis, *Ot Αφρικανοί στην Κρήτη*, 78–82.

52 Spratt, *Travels and Researches*, 142–43, cited in Pankhurst, “Ethiopian,” 342.

53 For a similar argument, see Thornton, *Africa*, 162. Chania also had an extremely high number of ‘unemployed Muslims’ and illiterate people, according to Stavrake’s census of 1881. Perhaps this is as close as we can get to statistical evidence for the African population; see Stavrake, *Στατιστική*, 146–47.

54 See Lewis, “Introduction: Zar in Context,” 1–16.

55 Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 203–54; see also Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 173–76.

56 For a discussion on the gendered nature of *zar/bori*, see Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits*, and Lewis et al., *Women’s Medicine*.

57 Ismail, *Folk Medicine*, 62.

58 This is the term that denotes being possessed by a spirit (see below).

59 In Turkish, *amca* can mean both uncle and, informally, older man.

60 Saz, *Anılar*, 67–68. I wish like to thank Emre Ünlüçayaklı for checking my translation.

61 Güneş, “Kölelikten Özgürüğe,” 6.

62 Ismail, *Folk Medicine*, 62–63. Ismail based his passages on *zar/bori* on newspaper articles by Zaynab Fawwaz. On Fawaz, see Booth, *May Her Likes Be Multiplied*, 1–34; Salama, “Zar,” 1040.

63 Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 209, 228.

64 Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits*, 131. Also cited in Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 217.

65 Ismail, *Folk Medicine*, 63–65.

66 Ferichou, “Possession Cults of Tunisia,” 212; Fakhouri, “Zar Cult,” 52–53.

67 For Toledano’s detailed discussion on Yavru Bey’s origins, *As If Silent and Absent*, 224–26.

68 Rouaud and Battain, “Zar” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam Online*.

69 It is also known that *zar/bori* was practiced in the North African ports through which sub-Saharan Africans being transported to Crete would have passed: Tremearne, *Ban of the Bori*.

70 For information on Istanbul's festival, see Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 174–76. For a brief mention of festivities in Basra, see Jwaideh and Cox, “The Black Slaves of Turkish Arabia during the 19th Century,” 45–59.

71 Dikmen, ed., *Osmanlıca—Türkçe Sözlük*, 62.

72 Güneş, “Kölelikten Özgürliğe,” 7.

73 Güneş, “Kölelikten Özgürliğe,” 7–8.

74 Güneş, “Kölelikten Özgürliğe,” 8–9.

75 Papadakis, *Oι Αφρικανοί στην Κρήτη*, 133–37.

76 Papadakis, *Oι Αφρικανοί στην Κρήτη*, 140

77 Papadakis, *Oι Αφρικανοί στην Κρήτη*, 140–41.

78 Papadakis, *Oι Αφρικανοί στην Κρήτη*, 133.

79 Papadakis uses εβληγία (Turkish: *evliya*) to indicate that they are Muslim saints. Papadakis, *Oι Αφρικανοί στην Κρήτη*, 133.

80 Papadakis, *Oι Αφρικανοί στην Κρήτη*, 133. I wish to thank Nikos Poulopoulos for checking my translation.

81 Raulin, *Voyage*, 1: 200 in Pankhurst, “Ethiopian,” 342.

82 Lear, *Cretan Journal*, 102.

83 Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 230–31; Papadakis, *Oι Αφρικανοί στην Κρήτη*, 147–58; Hunwick, “Religious Practices,” 159–60, 165–67. One of the earliest references to an African festival in the northern tier of the Ottoman Empire is Suraiya Faroqhi, “Black Slaves and Freedmen Celebrating (Aydin, 1576),” 205–11.

84 Fakhouri, “Zar Cult,” 50.

85 Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 204.

86 Baron and Cara, “Creolization and Folklore,” 5.

87 While Toledano does include Circassians in his initial definition at the start of the chapter, he does not discuss Circassian cultural creolization.

88 Baron and Cara, “Creolization and Folklore,” 4–8.

89 Graeden, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 119; Butler, *Freedoms Given*.

90 Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 1: 228.

91 Largueche, “La minorité noire de Tunis,” 146–47.

92 Hunwick, “Religious Practices,” 158; Montana, “Ahmad ibn al-Qadi al-Timbuktawi,” 182; Ferichou, “Possession Cults,” 212.

93 Koufopolou, “Muslim Cretans,” 209–10. For Syria and Lebanon, see Tsokalidou, “Greek Speaking Enclaves.”

94 Koufopolou, “Muslim Cretans,” 211. For a detailed account of this process, see Clark, *Twice a Stranger*.

95 Koufopolou, “Muslim Cretans,” 211–12.

96 Koufopolou, “Muslim Cretans,” 209–10; Olpak, *Köle Kıyısından*, 33.

97 See the work of Koufopolou, cited above.

98 Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 173–84; Güneş, “Kölelikten Özgürlüğe,” 4–5; Martal, “Afrika’dan Izmir’e,” 171–79; Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 143–44.

99 Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 179; Güneş, “Kölelikten Özgürlüğe,” 5; Martal, “Afrika’dan Izmir’e,” 176.

100 Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 181. For Izmir’s agricultural development, see Reşat Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy*.

101 Martal, “Afrika’dan Izmir’e,” 176–78.

102 Great Britain, House of Commons, Parliamentary Papers, *Turkey No. 7 (1896); Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Crete*, C.8193, 221, no. 385.

103 Great Britain, House of Commons Command Paper, *Turkey No. 7 (1896)*: 86–87, no. 141.

104 Great Britain, House of Commons Command Paper, *Turkey No. 7 (1896)*: 252, no. 423.

105 Papadakis, *Oι Αφοικανοί στην Κρήτη*, 247–49.

106 Holland, “Nationalism,” 265.

107 Papadakis, *Oι Αφοικανοί στην Κρήτη*, 248–49.

108 Papadakis, *Oι Αφοικανοί στην Κρήτη*, 249–51. I would like to thank George Kellaris for this translation.

109 Olpak, *Köle Kriyosndan*, 31–33; charging people to access transportation that would take them out of Greece was in violation of Article 6 of the treaty: “No obstacle may be placed for any reason whatever in the way of the departure of a person belonging to the populations which are to be exchanged. . . .” For the treaty, Hirschon, *Crossing the Aegean*, 282–87; for a summary of this process, see Ağaoğlu, *Osmanlı’dan Cumhuriyet’e*, 292–95.

110 Koufopolou, “Muslim Cretans,” 213.

111 Olpak, *Köle Kriyosndan*, 34–41, 47–48. Also, see chapters by Kozma and Powell in this volume.

112 Papadakis, *Oι Αφοικανοί στην Κρήτη*, 263–68; Nikos Stavrolakis (Email communication, 12 November, 2008); Montana, “Ahmad ibn al-Qadi al-Timbuktawi,” 180–81.

113 Papadakis, *Oι Αφοικανοί στην Κρήτη*, 260–62; an example of an ‘African’ being in the service of a Christian can be found in Great Britain, House of Commons Command Paper, *Turkey No. 7 (1896)*: 221, no. 285.

114 Papadakis, *Oι Αφοικανοί στην Κρήτη*, 258–59. I’d like to thank Penny Gounis for helping me with this translation. Koko could also be Kuku, which was a common name given to Nuba, and is often found in Egypt as a name some slaves retained, even after emancipation, and means ‘first born’ in the Nuba language. My thanks to Terence Walz for this important information.

115 Güneş, “Kölelikten Özgürlüğe,” 10.

8

Black, Kinless, and Hungry: Manumitted Female Slaves in Khedival Egypt

Liat Kozma

On a summer day in 1877, Saluma, a Sudanese freed slave, knocked on a stranger's door in the Palestinian village of Tira in the Ottoman province of Nablus. Saluma had been kidnapped from Cairo about five months earlier. She was smuggled through al-Arish to Tira, along with five other women, to be sold there as slaves. Her kidnappers had sent her to get some bread from a local bakery, and she was now waiting outside a stranger's house, hoping for a friendly face. The woman who opened the door listened to her story and hastened to inform the local authorities in Nablus. The authorities then sent the six women and their kidnappers to the Cairo police station and from there they returned to their homes. Two of the other women were named Fatima, and the others were called Zayn al-Mal, Bakhita and Sa'ida. Common slave-names, these were probably given to them by their enslavers. Their original names might have long been forgotten.¹

One prevalent assumption regarding manumitted slaves in Islamic societies is that incorporation of slaves into free society was not problematic, because free status and common religion erased all stigmas. Historian Judith Tucker, for example, maintained that former slaves became a part of the classes that formerly enslaved them.² As Terence Walz's chapter in this volume demonstrates, this often might have been the case. For many, manumission did not entail severance of owner-slave relations, as these continued in the form of patronage without bondage. Freed slaves often remained attached to the manumitter's household and rendered services to their former owner in exchange for social and economic protection. Manumitted slaves were allowed to own property, to hold office and to fully engage in economic, political, and social life, sometimes engaging in the same trade as their former masters. Ron Shaham has demonstrated that childless slave owners sometimes named former slaves of both genders, both African and white, as *waqf* beneficiaries or administrators. In her article on slaves in sixteenth-century Istanbul, Yvonne Seng similarly argues that slaves were readily absorbed into the local community.³

However, Cairo police (Dabtiyya) and Supreme Council of Adjudication (Majlis al-Ahkam) records from the 1850s to the early 1880s, the period of continuous abolition efforts, demonstrate that at least for some female slaves, freedom sometimes substituted the stability of enslavement with uncertainty and loneliness. My argument in this chapter is that gender and blackness of skin added vulnerabilities that freed white slaves, and even black male slaves, did not have to deal with. Freed female slaves had fewer employment options and often had to support young children. These are often invisible in the 'easily absorbed into the free society' narrative.

Several Councils of Adjudication, founded in the 1850s, supplemented the Sharia court in pursuing justice and adjudicated cases from throughout Egypt in accordance with the 1855 Sultanic Code, which was a local adaptation of the Ottoman Penal Code. Police investigation and forensic examinations enabled more effective control of the population, and left behind an unprecedented plethora of documents, which only a few historians (including Emad Helal) have hitherto explored. Police and council documents record interactions between the police and lower-class women who got into trouble with the law. Relevant to our discussion here are runaway slaves, or slaves who fell victim to physical or sexual assault,

abuse, or illegal trade. Those who have studied Sharia court records and *waqf* records examined the more privileged among the slaves, while the current article focuses on the more marginal and disempowered.

In this chapter, I examine the case of Saluma and her friends to interrogate the fate awaiting manumitted slaves in late nineteenth-century Egypt, at a time in which the banning of the slave trade and abolition efforts were already under way. These women were kidnapped because they were black, kinless, and hungry, in a society where most black women were still slaves. Most of them were kidnapped as they were looking for employment. Most experienced months and years of employment uncertainty after their manumission. Racial prejudice, and detachment from the support networks that defined an individual's identity in pre-colonial Egypt, marked the fate and life choices of many manumitted slaves at this point in Egyptian history. Race here denotes skin color, African origin and a (real or assumed) past in slavery, as the terms *sawda* (black), *sudaniyya* (Sudanese), and *jariya* (female slave) were used in this case interchangeably to describe women who were actually freed slaves, representing the lingering image of women and men of African origins in Egyptian society. It is worth noting here that these women and men were not further differentiated by geographic origins or tribe: more often than not they were simply described as black (*aswad* or *sawda*) in police and council records.

Following Ehud Toledano, I understand enslavement as a form of legalized violence, and at the same time, as a form of attachment. Enslavement entailed forced migration into a new cultural context, requiring creative coping mechanisms, acculturation, and integration. It stripped the individual of her earlier life—family, community, even name and religion—while at the same time integrating her into new social networks, most notably the family. Thus, although manumission meant freedom, it ruptured the newly acquired bonds.⁴

Using police and council records, I investigate here how former slaves survived the months and years following their manumission. I first explain the status of female slaves in Islamic law, then move to explaining how international abolition efforts affected the status of slaves in late nineteenth-century Egypt, in exactly the period that marked the lives of the six women noted above. I then examine the archival sources that relate similar stories, and explore the life choices of women caught up in this historical moment.

Enslavement

Slavery in the Ottoman Empire, including Egypt, operated within the boundaries prescribed by Islamic law. The Sharia views slaves as both property and persons. Although it establishes slave owners' property rights, it also offers slaves some protection against abuse. As property, slaves could be owned, sold, given away as a gift, and bequeathed. As persons, their legal rights and obligations were limited. Slaves could convert to Islam, and once they had done so, they were obliged to perform most religious duties. Slaves could also get married, but only with their owner's permission, and a male slave could marry only two wives (as opposed to four for free men). Slaves also enjoyed legal protection against neglect and abuse. A slave could demand to be resold on the grounds that her owner did not provide for her basic needs; and in some schools of jurisprudence, severe neglect made manumission compulsory.⁵

Islamic law provided slaves with a semi-kinship relationship with their masters in the form of legal tutelage (*wilaya*), which a slave could retain, at least formally, after manumission as well. This status offered a substitute for the family protection that freeborn men and women enjoyed under law. Thus, a former enslaver was to pay blood money when his or her manumitted slave could not—an obligation of the extended family in the case of freeborn Muslims. A slave owner inherited the property of his or her manumitted slaves, but not the other way round. Enslavers served as their slaves' guardians at marriage—a duty that was normally assigned to a freeperson's male relative. Manumitted slaves were also identified throughout their lives by the name of their former owners, in a way similar to a freeborn person's identification by his or her father's name.⁶

The status of female slaves was different from that of males in several significant ways. Men were allowed to cohabit with female slaves they owned as long as the latter were not married. Female slaves, moreover, were particularly valued as domestic servants. They were not subjected to the same gender segregation norms as free women, and were able to perform outdoor chores that allowed their mistresses to stay at home. Although women's seclusion was a privilege of the elite, it was seen as an ideal in other classes as well, and slavery enabled such privileged life, at least partially. This made female slaves a much-desired property, and in nineteenth-century Egypt they outnumbered male slaves by a ratio of three to one.

A female slave's destiny, unlike that of her male counterpart, was mediated through her reproductive history. A slave who gave birth to her owner's child gained the privileged status of *umm walad* (mother of a child). This status meant that she was not to be sold to another for as long as her owner lived and was to be freed upon her owner's death. Children of these unions were free at birth and considered their fathers' legitimate heirs. A child of a female slave born to a man other than her owner, on the other hand, became the enslaver's property but could not be sold separately from his or her mother.⁷

In Islamic legal theory, manumission is considered a meritorious act. Most manumitted slaves were freed through verbal declaration by their masters; many female slaves became free upon their owner's death as *umm walad*. Slaves had the option of buying their freedom, but only a few could afford it. Emad Helal argues that since manumission was considered meritorious, a slave owner who insisted on having a slave pay for his or her freedom was looked down upon.⁸

Although Islamic law does not recognize any distinctions among slaves, in practice slaves were differentiated by race—both skin color and place of origin.⁹ White slaves, imported from the Caucasus and Georgia, were often conscripted to the ranks of the elite—the men as soldiers and bureaucrats and the women as concubines in what historians now call the *kul/harem* system. In the late eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire banned the import of white slaves to Egypt, hoping thus to weaken Egypt's rebellious Mamluk elite. The Russian occupation of Georgia and the Caucasus further limited the white slave trade, thus reducing the number of white slaves in Egypt. According to Gabriel Baer, they numbered about two thousand in 1839, but declined considerably thereafter.¹⁰ Abyssinian women were more expensive than their Sudanese counterparts, and considered more suitable as concubines. Most slaves in Egypt were known as black (*aswad*) or Sudanese (*sudani*). These were imported from Central Africa (mainly present-day Chad) and southern Sudan. Baer estimates the number of black slaves in the 1850s as between twenty and thirty thousand, about half of them in Cairo. Egypt's population at the time was about five million, with 276,000 living in the capital.¹¹

Slave ownership was not merely the prerogative of the Muslim elite. Members of all classes could own Sudanese and Ethiopian slaves, and many slave owners were Jews and Christians, although officially such slave ownership was illegal, and Jews and Christians were periodically

forced to free their slaves. Slave ownership, moreover, was a status symbol for people of all classes. Baer and Helal found slave owners among Bedouins, peasants, merchants, clerks, state officials, and army officers of all ranks, religious functionaries, and more. Lower-class households could not afford more than one slave.¹² The freed slaves found in Tira reflect this diversity. Fatima's former owner was a pasha-ranked official and Saluma's was an Efendi. Bakhita's former owner was a lumber merchant and the owner of the second Fatima was a translator (*tarjuman*, which might also mean a tour guide). Zayn al-Mal had been owned by a Copt from Zaqqaziq, and Sa'ida had been owned by a Jew from Alexandria.¹³

The manumission option and low fertility rates among slaves created continuous demand for imported slaves.¹⁴ Since the enslavement of free-born Muslims was illegal, slaves had to be imported from non-Muslim lands. They were acquired mainly through raids, kidnapping, or capture as prisoners of war. In nineteenth-century Egypt, slaves were imported principally from sub-Saharan Africa. The largest slave caravans reached Egypt from Darfur, through a desert route known as Darb al-Arba'in (the Forty-day Road), which led to Asyut in Upper Egypt. Many others reached Egypt from the Kordofan region, while still others arrived via the Nile or the Red Sea. Many perished on the way.¹⁵

Evidence of life in bondage is scattered and fragmented. Archival sources describe mainly moments of conflict and pain, since these were the instances that reached the police or courts. Records of runaway slaves rarely mention motivation for escape. When they do, they employ no more than a word or two: 'unhappiness' (*adam rahatihim*) or 'hardship' (*ta'ab*). Such tropes conceal more complicated life stories, but in legal language they simply mean that a slave had the legal right to ask to be resold. In rare cases, slaves mentioned physical punishment or beating but did not offer any further details.¹⁶ There is also some evidence of sexual abuse, as socially and legally defined in a society that did not see slavery itself and the sexual access of enslavers to their female slaves as a form of abuse. In sexual abuse cases that did reach the police and courts, a man had sexual intercourse with a slave he did *not* own. Most often, this was a slave belonging to another member of his household, such as a wife or parent.¹⁷

Alongside pain and abuse, archival sources relate stories of escape or attempted escape. Slaves attempting to escape were often aware of their legal rights and opted for absconding because they believed that

even if caught, resale or even manumission were bound to improve their lot. In his discussion of Ottoman slavery, Toledano views absconding as a calculated act by people at least partly aware of the consequences and risks involved. They escaped in order to improve their lot outside the slavery system, sometimes with another enslaver, and sometimes to improve their living conditions within their own households once captured and returned.¹⁸

Slavery and the Khedival State: The Road to Abolition

The case of the six slaves belongs to a period of increased international efforts to suppress the slave trade. In August 1877, Egypt signed the Anglo-Egyptian Slave Trade Convention and agreed to take assertive measures against the slave trade. This was an important moment, but not the first effective step toward abolition. This convention fell in the middle of over four decades of British pressure and local efforts, from the 1854 banning of the slave trade to its demise in the 1890s.

The middle of the century witnessed an increase in the African slave traffic to Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. Egypt's occupation of the Sudan in 1821 and the Ottoman reoccupation of Tripoli in 1835 facilitated the importation of slaves to both Cairo and Istanbul. The cotton boom further increased the demand for slave labor in the Ottoman provinces, particularly Egypt, and among new classes who could now afford it.¹⁹

Efforts to abolish slavery started in Britain itself in the mid-eighteenth century, with attempts to do away with bondage in Britain's own colonies. By the early decades of the nineteenth century, anti-slavery had become part of the British middle-class's value system, and was then incorporated into the British national identity, closely associated with enlightenment ideas, and into the colonial civilizing mission. Following the American Civil War, abolitionists came to focus on the Ottoman Empire, including Egypt, and helped establish British hegemony in the region, as part of its imperial project.²⁰

In December 1854, responding to international pressure, Egypt's governor Said Pasha issued a decree banning the importation of slaves from the Sudan. The decree further ordered that slave caravans be stopped at customs and all slaves emancipated and returned to the Sudan. The effectiveness of this decree and the ones that followed in subsequent years was limited.²¹ Baer ascribes the relative failure of early abolition attempts to a strong interest group of slave merchants and to the

involvement of state officials in slave ownership and trade. The officials who had to take measures against the slave trade owned, purchased, and even traded slaves themselves and had difficulty understanding why they should attempt to stop the trade. The new orders from Cairo ran counter to their commonsense understanding of their role and of racial and religious hierarchies.²²

Khedive Ismail, Said's successor, took more assertive measures against the slave trade. He ordered the governor of the Sudan to arrest slave merchants, free the slaves, and imprison the traders. He also sent military expeditions to sub-Saharan Africa, with the proclaimed purpose of combating the slave trade at its origins. Ismail replaced some of his own officials with European ones (such as Samuel Baker and Charles G. Gordon), who indeed proved more effective in combating traders. To Ismail, such measures were designed to make Egypt a recognized part of Europe, as a colonizing, civilizing nation.²³

Continuous demand, however, led to persistent trafficking. International pressure led, in August 1877, to the signing of an Anglo-Egyptian Convention with the purpose of stopping the slave trade from reaching or passing through Egypt. Egypt agreed to suppress the trade, punish merchants, and free slaves caught in these caravans. The Convention provided for a seven-year grace period in Egypt (twelve in the Sudan) for the sale of slaves between families. In addition, the Convention and the decrees that followed provided for the foundation of manumission bureaus that would supplement the police in handling slaves and manumission. These bureaus were authorized to issue manumission documents to all slaves wishing to be freed, even against their owners' wishes. The bureaus' officials were also to help freed slaves find salaried jobs. Women were to be employed in 'government centers' or as domestic servants in 'respectable homes'—jobs that were extensions of the role they used to play in Egyptian society, and the role that freeborn Egyptians were used to seeing them play. Men were to be given agricultural, industrial, or domestic jobs, while children were to be sent to government schools.²⁴

With the decline of the legal slave trade, continuous demand for slaves initially led to a brisk illegal trade. The importing of slaves from the Sudan, and the kidnapping of slaves and freed slaves, appear in police and court records from the 1850s onward.²⁵ Illegal traffic, as the case of the six women illustrates, also included traffic of freed women, a

problem that the central authorities in Cairo came to acknowledge. An 1880 Police Act describes the border-crossing stage: “Some charlatans, especially of West African origins (*Dakarna*), deceitfully collect Sudanese women and children and sell them to Bedouins, who then smuggle them to Gaza and other places to sell them there.”²⁶ The six women described here followed exactly this route.

Black, Kinless, and Hungry

In their interrogation at the police station, all six narrated similar stories. They were unemployed, even hungry, and met a woman who offered them a job in al-Abbasiyya, a new neighborhood on the outskirts of Cairo. When they reached the desert, a staged Bedouin attack took place, their jewelry was stolen, and they were carried away to a cave in al-Huwaytan Mountain in the Sinai. During their weeks-long stay there, more women were brought in, about two or three a week. When their number totaled about forty, their kidnappers distributed them among several traders. Their particular group traveled to Tira. Almost all six mentioned two free children, aged six and eight, who were kidnapped in Manshiyya, Alexandria, and were then sold in al-Arish and Gaza. Hawa, another freed slave kidnapped under similar circumstances, told the police that two women of her group were too old to endure the journey and were murdered by their captors before leaving al-Arish, so they would not hold up the entire group.²⁷

As difficult as life in bondage may have been, freedom presented its own challenges, particularly economic ones. The persistence of abolition efforts turned manumitted slaves into a large-scale social problem—rather than merely an individual predicament.

In an essay by nationalist thinker Abdallah al-Nadim in 1892, discussed by Eve Troutt Powell in this volume, a manumitted slave called Bakhita claimed free life to be harder than slavery. For her, the uncertainty of independent living was almost intolerable. Although domestic labor did not differ much from her experience as a slave, it was confusing and difficult to work in a different household every month.²⁸ Half a century earlier, French physician Clot Bey similarly captured some of the hardship facing manumitted slaves in Egyptian society. European tourists, he wrote, bought slaves in order to emancipate them, believing they were performing charity. Clot Bey argued that they were actually condemning the freed women to further misery: “In a country in which

a woman cannot live without male tutelage liberty forces the manumitted slave to choose between two lamentable alternatives—poverty or prostitution.”²⁹ Put in other words, manumission deprived women (and men) of social capital crucial for economic survival—not only the protection of an individual man, but social networks such as the family, the community, and the guild, which provided employment, financial security, protection, good name, and marriage opportunities. This form of manumission, by foreigners, severed ties with the enslaver’s family that might have offered some protection.

Both comments, though written by free men, reflect what manumitted slaves described in police and council records—economic insecurity and the absence of family, community and guild networks, which made life very difficult. The centrality of skin color to the system of slavery, and the importance of social networks to individual identity and to her economic and social survival made freed life, at least in the anonymity of the large cities, a difficult task for freed women of African origins. Manumission meant detachment from all-important social support networks. Outside these networks, freed slaves had to persevere mostly on their own. Like manumitted slaves elsewhere, they had a hard time finding employment.³⁰ According to Baer, moreover, the market for free labor was very limited before the late nineteenth century. It was only when the labor market was capable of assimilating them that freed slaves integrated into Egyptian society.³¹

The 1877 Anglo-Egyptian Convention was well aware of this newly acquired vulnerability. It established a set of instructions for the local police to ask manumitted slaves, upon their release, whether they had any means of livelihood, and to verify their claims. If they were found to be unable to support themselves, the convention then stipulated, they should be employed in agriculture or in domestic labor.³² This specific stipulation attests to the extent of the problem and to official understanding of the consequences of mass manumissions. It also implies that freed slaves continued to fill the kinds of roles that they had filled in Egyptian society as slaves—as domestic and agricultural workers.

The story of the six manumitted slaves reflects this economic insecurity. All six were captured while seeking employment. Sa’ida had been manumitted a year before, worked for a butcher for three and a half months, and when he left for the Hijaz she remained unemployed. Fatima’s Nubian husband had divorced her a year before and left for his

home village; she subsequently worked for a scribe of the Egyptian Bank for six months, and then left and had been unemployed for a month. Bakhita had been manumitted eight years before and had worked as a servant ever since.³³

Slavery was associated with skin color and origin (see Walz and Cuno in this volume),³⁴ and it may have impeded social integration after manumission. Powell argues that as late as the 1890s, Sudanese were seen as a part of the domestic scene, as the servants and doormen of Egyptian society, and social mobility was therefore difficult. Egypt's colonial relations with the Sudan further led many Egyptians to see Sudanese as barbarians civilized by Egyptian occupation.³⁵

Blackness of skin also put manumitted slaves in actual danger. First, because they were readily identified as they wandered about looking for employment. Two of the women found in Tira were clearly targeted by their kidnappers because they were black and hungry. Zayn al-Mal was approached by "a man who recognized her, but she did not recognize"—a man who recognized her vulnerability or even learned of it from a third person. Sa'ida met the woman who had kidnapped her on the street as she was looking for employment, and both women started talking since she was a Sudanese "of the same race," which might imply not only a slave status, but also a specific ethnic group.³⁶ Here, more clearly, it was blackness of skin, combined with hunger and despair, which made Sa'ida conspicuous and vulnerable to her kidnappers.

Black manumitted slaves could easily be resold as slaves. A black woman, wandering the streets of Cairo or offered for sale was assumed, by default, to be a slave, unless she could prove otherwise. Runaway slaves were found by government-paid guards, and policemen kept a watchful eye on blacks who could not satisfactorily explain their whereabouts or display manumission documents.³⁷ Identification as a slave was not based on skin color alone, however. As Powell demonstrates, it was also slaves' clothing that made them immediately recognizable. She cites a court case in which a doorman recognized a woman to be a slave because she "came in a black robe and a white veil, like the clothing of a slave."³⁸ It may have also been a woman's habitus, her body language, and the way she moved in public spaces, which made it easy to distinguish her from freeborn Muslims.

Therein lay the importance of manumission documents for the very survival of freed slaves. In a society of growing physical mobility, in which

communities were shattered or displaced, documents came to replace the authority of the local community in authenticating a person's identity. Ottoman Sharia court records document numerous manumission deeds (*i'taknames*) and manumitted slaves probably also held copies of such deeds.³⁹ For black women wandering the streets of late nineteenth-century Cairo, these documents meant freedom. Oral testimony to the verbal act of manumission was not always easy to come by in a city of more than 250,000 inhabitants. These documents were crucial for finding a job for women who had no other means of support. Accordingly, the 1877 Anglo-Egyptian Convention defined denial of manumission documents as equivalent to denial of freedom. Anyone who took away or withheld a freed slave's documents was punishable as a slave trader.⁴⁰

Freed slaves who came to the police station and complained that their documents had been withheld stated that they literally could not survive without them. In one such case, three freed slaves claimed that since they had not received their manumission documents, they could not find employment as free women and were on the verge of starvation. The police station then conducted a brief investigation that verified their claims and granted them such documents.⁴¹ In another case, a man illegally resold his manumitted slave and withheld her manumission document. A government official was about to purchase her when she informed him of her actual status. After an initial denial, her former owner agreed to provide the documents, which would "enable her to work for her living" and would also protect her from illegal trade.⁴²

Without means of support or community networks, many freed slaves had to fend for themselves. Some chose to remain with their former owners as servants, fearing the economic insecurity of freedom. Domestic service was the kind of work they were expected to find outside of their former enslavers' homes anyway. Manumission bureaus, founded in 1877 following the Convention, as noted above, actively referred freed slaves to domestic labor.⁴³ Other women settled into marital life, while others resorted to prostitution. Many of them formed their own alternative networks which, as our opening case demonstrates, sometimes failed, as the friendly face of a fellow freed slave sometimes turned out to be that of a trader.

Some runaway slaves and manumitted slaves saw the Sudan as a viable alternative to life in Egypt. It is hard to determine how widespread this choice had been, how many survived the journey back home, and what

they found when they got there, as the slave trade probably dramatically affected their native communities. Some of their family members and friends might not have been there when they returned. In one case, the police reproached a slave owner who waited a week before asking their help in finding his runaway slave for not reporting her escape earlier, “although he knew that when slaves, both male and female, run away from their masters, they normally go to the Sudan.”⁴⁴ A black woman named Badi Sabah was found on a Nile boat; she immediately confessed that she had indeed escaped from her mistress with the purpose of “going to her country” and had stolen some of her mistress’s clothes and jewelry, probably to finance her long journey.⁴⁵ A manumitted slave named Bahr al-Zayn asked the Cairo police to send her back to the Sudan and help her find a husband in the Sudan regiment. The police station granted her request and sent her to the Sudan.⁴⁶

The extent of this phenomenon is not known, and yet is it safe to assume that it was a reasonably accessible option. Manumitted male slaves were often conscripted to the Egyptian army and made the journey back home as soldiers. Some of them traveled to Egypt, married freewomen and settled there, and their stories might have inspired some of their peers. It was a long, expensive, and dangerous journey, though, and those who chose to take it were probably few in number. In some cases the authorities might have been more than willing to help those who wanted to return to the Sudan, sparing Cairo’s streets from yet another vagrant.

For some manumitted slaves, marriage was an option, but sometimes only a temporary one. Of the six women found in Tira, Fatima married a Nubian after her manumission, but he divorced her a few years later when he returned to his country. The other Fatima was married to a man named Muhammad al-Bayumi and was kidnapped when he was away traveling; upon his return he informed police of her absence, and it was his complaint that initiated the investigation from the Egyptian side. Zayn al-Mal married a Sudanese servant who died shortly after his conscription; after his death, her former owner chose to throw her out of his residence and she had to find a place on her own. A freed slave called Hawa was found in Jaffa in the course of the investigation. She was married to a Sudanese soldier who had left for the Sudan. One of the traders told her that several men, including her husband, had deserted, and promised her that he was waiting for her in al-Abbasiyya, where she had been kidnapped.⁴⁷

Some manumitted slaves had children, some of whom were born of their former masters. Some tried to keep their children after manumission, although custody belonged to the father or his household. In one case, a freed slave lost custody when she married a former officer of the Cairo police station. Manumitted slaves, like divorcees, lost legal custody upon remarriage. She came to court claiming that she divorced her husband and demanded custody over the child she formerly had with her enslaver. A neighbor then testified that Fatima and her ex-husband were still living in the same household, which might have implied that they had pretended to divorce for the sole purpose of regaining custody of her child.⁴⁸ In other cases, women had to support children unacknowledged and unsupported by their father's family. Of the six women found in Tira only one, Saluma, was a mother. She had borne her enslaver a daughter, now twelve years old, and had to leave his residence because of frequent conflicts with his wife. He got her an apartment in Azbakiyya, and both Saluma and her daughter worked as seamstresses to support themselves.⁴⁹

In order to find work, freed slaves had to rely on new networks and institutions. Nineteenth-century travelers in Istanbul described self-help organizations of freed slaves that provided help against enslavers but also against sickness and life's misfortunes, in the form of popular religious practices. The *zar* ceremonies provided revenue and prestige to Abyssinian and Sudanese slaves.⁵⁰ This set of beliefs constituted some combination (or creolization) of orthodox Islam, Sufi Islam, and African beliefs brought by slaves. As a public ritual, the *zar* served social functions, alongside its healing potential. It brought women together, in an exclusively female environment, which offered power that was denied them in other social arenas, and sometimes destabilized, momentarily, racial and class-based power relations.⁵¹

In Cairo, foreign observers noted the existence of a guild of male domestic servants, which became stronger in the late nineteenth century following the abolition of the slave trade and large-scale manumission.⁵² According to British traveler Edward William Lane, who wrote in the 1830s, servants in large towns were under the authority of a shaykh, who helped potential employers find servants, and then became responsible for the conduct of the servant he had recommended and was held accountable in case of theft.⁵³

I could not find evidence of a servants' guild, but did find some references to an employment agent (*mukhaddima*) prior to the foundation

of the manumission bureaus in 1877. These agents helped manumitted slaves find employment, mainly as domestic servants. In one case recorded in the council's archives, a freed slave called Fatima found a job through an employment agent after presenting her manumission documents. Fatima did not hold the job for long—she stole a precious ring from her employer and escaped.⁵⁴ In another case, an employment agent called Aisha illegally sold a slave to a woman who had asked for her help in finding a servant and settled for a slave.⁵⁵ Hawa, the freed slave kidnapped to Jaffa, managed to contact the British consulate and was returned to Cairo. Once there, she asked the police to refer her to a *mukhaddima*, who helped her find a job.⁵⁶

There is some evidence that some former slaves resorted to prostitution, while others worked as servants in brothels. This is hardly surprising, as those reduced to poverty, sometimes having to support children, had few other choices.⁵⁷ One murder case, for example, refers to an Ethiopian freed slave named Za'faran as a prostitute,⁵⁸ while another mentions a Sudanese slave called Halima as the brothel's servant.⁵⁹ Most tragic, perhaps, is the story of a Sudanese woman named Bakhita, who was murdered by a Sudanese soldier because she had not kept her promise to leave the brothel and marry him. She was a slave in an Alexandrian household and her enslaver manumitted her and several other slaves before his death. She had been unhappy in his household and left soon after his death to work in a brothel in the al-Taratushi slum in Alexandria; from there she moved to the al-Ma'ruf slums in Bulaq.⁶⁰

Conclusion

The abolition of slavery and large-scale manumission changed the face of Egyptian families and communities. It created a large group of kinless women (and to a lesser extent men), who were not affiliated with any social networks. As Ahmad Sikainga notes in his study of emancipation in Sudan, women had fewer employment opportunities and were thus more vulnerable to abuse.⁶¹ The newly founded manumission bureaus opted for housework for women and military service for men—helping to 'clear' the streets from potential beggars and prey for illegal trade.

Abolition was a process in which the Egyptian administration, and more specifically the legal system, had to readjust their mechanisms and conceptualization of slavery. From a legal system that sanctioned slavery and the inherent inequality between freeperson and slave, it

turned to abolishing the slave trade as an unjust and inhumane practice. State authorities, moreover, came to see slaves more as persons and less as property.

At the same time, slaves themselves were undergoing a process of readjustment to their new lives as freepersons, as individuals, and as a social group. Some chose to stay on with their former enslavers and preferred the security of their masters' households to the insecurities of the job market. Others chose to return to the Sudan. Still others remained in Egypt and learned to cope with racial prejudice and the inaccessibility of established social networks. To do so, they formed networks of their own, with varying rates of success. The story that opened this chapter is about slavery and manumission, free labor, and readjustment to free life; it is also a story about race. Most importantly, it is a story about female agency—that of a woman named Saluma who mustered the courage to knock on a stranger's door one summer's day in 1877.

Notes

- 1 Dabtiyyat Misr, L/2/6/2, case no. 195, 21 Dhu al-Qa'da 1294 (26 November 1877): 155–68.
- 2 Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 188.
- 3 Ron Shaham, "Masters," 162–88; Seng, "Slaves in Sixteenth-Century Istanbul," 136–69.
- 4 Toledano's recent book makes a similar argument with regard to the central Ottoman Empire. See his *As If Silent and Absent*, 24–34.
- 5 On status of slaves in Islamic law, see Brunschvig, "Abd," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2d ed., 1: 26–29; Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 179; Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 196–97; Hunwick, "Same But Different," xv–xvi; Marmon, *Slavery in the Islamic Middle East*, 5–6; Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition*, 6; Walz, "Black Slavery in Egypt," in Willis, *Slaves and Slavery*, 2: 139; Schacht, *Introduction to Islamic Law*, 128.
- 6 Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 180, 189; Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 211; Marmon, *Slavery in the Islamic Middle East*, 15; Hanna, "Slave Women and Concubines," 125.
- 7 Mowafi, *Slavery*, 13; Baer, "Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt," 423; Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition*, 14; Robinson-Dunn, *Harem*, 13–14.
- 8 Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 181–84, 187; Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 196–99, 206–207; Brunschvig, "Abd," 26–30.
- 9 Freeborn Egyptians, on the other hand, were sometimes ethnically defined as Arabic-speaking (*abna' al-Arab*) or Turkish speaking (*abna' al-Atراك*). See: Powell, *Different Shade*, 17.

- 10 Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition*, 53; Peirce, *Imperial Harem*; Baer, “Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 417–18, Toledano, “Slave Dealers,” 53.
- 11 Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 167; Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 42–44; Baer, “Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 423.
- 12 Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 171; Mowafi, *Slavery*, 12–14; Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 192–195; Baer, “Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 422.
- 13 Dabtiyyat Misr, L/2/6/2, case no. 195, 21 Dhu al-Qa‘da 1294 (26 November 1877), 155–68.
- 14 Mowafi, *Slavery*, 15; Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 200; Brunschwig, “Abd,” 26.
- 15 For details on the slave trade, see Mowafi, *Slavery*, 29–31, 45–54; Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition*, 15–54.
- 16 See, for example, Dabtiyyat Misr, L/2/5/30, case no. 412 (Ali Efendi, Ra‘is Ta’ifat al-Yasirjiyya fi al-Mahrusa), 22 Sha‘ban 1270 (18 May 1854), 15; Dabtiyyat Misr, L/2/5/31, case no. 737, 24 Shawwal 1270 (18 July 1854), 50; Dabtiyyat Misr, L/2/5/31, case no. 198 (Sulayman Agha Abu Dawud Ra‘is al-Yasirjiyya al-Aswad bi-l-Mahrusa), 14 Dhu al-Qa‘da 1270 (8 August 1854), 124; Dabtiyyat Misr, L/2/5/40, case no. 172 (sayira—da’irat sa‘ada Mustafa Bek), 18 Jumada I 1272 (1 March 1856), 172.
- 17 See one such case at Mahkamat al-Iskandariyya—Da‘awa, sijill no. 1, case no. 229, 12 Jumada II 1276 (5 January 1860), 107.
- 18 Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 70–79.
- 19 Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 55–57; Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition*, 212.
- 20 Robinson-Dunn, *Harem*, 31.
- 21 Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 343–47; Mowafi, *Slavery*, 56; Baer, “Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 430–31; Ma‘iyya Saniyya, S/1/1/7, case no. 91 (Mudiriyat Rawdat al-Bahrain), 11 Dhu al-Qa‘da 1272 (12 July 1856), 16; Robinson-Dunn, *Harem*, chapter 2.
- 22 Baer, “Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 435–37.
- 23 Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 348–49; Powell, *Different Shade*, 66–67; Mowafi, *Slavery*, 60–80; Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition*, 205–23; Baer, “Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 432.
- 24 Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 177; Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 357–60; Baer, “Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 433; See Jallad, *Qamus al-idara* 2: 239–53; Sami, *Taqwim al-Nil*, 3: 1487–91; Mowafi, *Slavery*, 129–30.
- 25 See, for example, Majlis al-Ahkam, S/7/57/3, case no. 135, 14 Shawwal 1274 (29 March 1858): 174–75.
- 26 “*Dabtiyya*,” article 6, in Jallad, *Qamus al-idara*, 4: 216.
- 27 Dabtiyyat Misr, L/2/6/2, case no. 195, 21 Dhu al-Qa‘da 1294 (26 November 1877): 155–68.
- 28 Powell, “Silence of the Slaves,” xxxii.

29 Clot-Bey, *Aperçu général sur l'Égypte*, 1: 275.

30 See, for example, Ginio, "Living on the Margins," in Bonner, et al., *Poverty and Charity*, 170–171; Ennaji, *Serving the Master*, 57–67; Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 33–34, 89.

31 Baer, "Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Egypt," 438–39.

32 Sami, *Taqwim al-Nil*, 3: 3, 1490.

33 Dabtiyyat Misr, L/2/6/2, case no. 195, 21 Dhu al-Qa‘da 1294 (26 November 1877): 155–68.

34 Hunwick, "Same but Different," xix–xx in Hunwick and Powell, *African Diaspora*; Hunwick, "Islamic Law and Polemics," in Marmon, *Slavery in the Islamic Middle East*, 43–44.

35 Powell, *Different Shade*, 72–87.

36 Powell, *Different Shade*, 72–87.

37 Walz, "Black Slavery in Egypt," 146–49.

38 Powell, "The Tools of the Master," 3.

39 It is unclear, however, how significant the documents themselves were before the nineteenth century, as the Sharia court, at least in theory, preferred oral testimony to written documents. Zilfi, "Women and Slavery," in Sonbol, *Beyond the Exotic*, 131.

40 Jallad, *Qamus al-idara*, 2: 240, 245; Amin, *Taqwim al-Nil*, 1489. Manumission documents did not gain such significance in the Ottoman center. See Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 116.

41 Muhamafazat Misr, L/1/20/2, case no. 18, 29 Sha‘ban 1272 (3 May 1856), 3; Muhamafazat Misr, L/1/20/2, case no. 20, 24 Sha‘ban 1272 (29 April 1856), 63.

42 Dabtiyyat Misr, L/2/5/40, case no. 5 (Ma‘iyya Khidiwiyya), 1 Jumada I 1272 (8 January 1856), 52, 62.

43 Such a choice was prevalent among female former slaves in other parts of the empire as well. See Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 144.

44 Majlis al-Ahkam, S/7/57/3, case no. 101, 29 Jumada II 1274 (13 February 1858), 144–48.

45 Majlis al-Ahkam, S/7/57/3, case no. 98, 2 Rajab 1274 (15 February 1858), 140–41.

46 Dabtiyyat Misr, L/2/5/40, case no. 681 (Sayira—Mir Alay al-Sudan), 16 Jumada II 1272 (22 February 1858), 168.

47 Dabtiyyat Misr, L/2/6/2, case no. 195, 21 Dhu al-Qa‘da 1294 (26 November 1877), 155–68.

48 Mahkamat Misr: murafa‘at wa-da‘awa, 1/99/3/1430, 18 Ramadan 1287 (9 December 1870), 30.

49 Dabtiyyat Misr, L/2/6/2, case no. 195, 21 Dhu al-Qa‘da 1294 (26 November 1877), 155–68.

50 Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, 174–76.

51 Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 212–27.

52 Baer, *Egyptian Guilds*, 30–31.

53 Lane, *Manners and Customs, Definitive 1860 Edition*, 125.

54 Majlis al-Ahkam, S/7/57/3, case no. 120, 24 Rajab 1274 (9 March 1858), 162–63.

55 Majlis al-Ahkam, S/7/57/3, case no. 135, 14 Sha‘ban 1274 (29 March 1858), 174–75.

56 Dabtiyyat Misr, L/2/6/2, case no. 195, 21 Dhu al-Qa‘da 1294 (26 November 1877), 155–68.

57 Helal, *al-Raqiq fi Misr*, 194, relying on Clot-Bey, *Aperçu général*, 1: 275.

58 Majlis al-Ahkam, S/7/10/103, case no. 58, 30 Muharram 1294 (13 February 1877), no pagination.

59 Majlis al-Ahkam, S/7/10/27 case no. 202, 26 Muharram 1285 (17 May 1868), no pagination.

60 Dabtiyyat Misr, L/2/51/6, case no. 228, 28 Dhu al-Qa‘da 1294 (2 December 1877), 7–10.

61 Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*, 54–57.

9

Slaves or Siblings? Abdallah al-Nadim's Dialogues about the Family

Eve M. Troutt Powell

In the 1890s, when the British occupation of Egypt was well entrenched, the make-up of the family and the structure of households had become explosive issues in the political struggle between British officials, Egyptian nationalists, and other intellectuals. The image of the family had evolved into being a symbol of timeless stability, yet also a target of cultural reform. The ideal of the family had become paradoxically synonymous with religious tradition, cultural morality, modernity, and a teleological sense of progress.¹ For nationalists, reformers, and educators alike in Egypt, the ideals of family values also bore a defensive significance. The traditions of the Egyptian family were seen as a cultural buffer against the British occupation. If reforms were needed to strengthen the intellectual and economic independence of women in Egyptian homes, it was often felt that such sensitive issues were best left to Islamic teachers, not to external, foreign supervision.

British officials, in their turn, often castigated this idealization of the Muslim Egyptian family as a prison for women, who were chained by

gender seclusion, veiling, and a lack of education. One can read in the documents of Lord Cromer and his associates in the Foreign Office how Egyptian Muslim women were often likened to slaves, and this metaphor raised yet another controversy—the much diminished but still contentious presence of slaves within Egyptian households that many in Europe found reprehensible. In defense, Egyptian clerics and lawyers pointed out that these slaves, the vast majority of whom were from sub-Saharan East Africa, were not at all the victims of violence that their counterparts in the Caribbean or in the U.S. South were, but instead were quickly and fully embraced by the households that purchased them as family members. One finds this argument again and again, as this chapter will demonstrate. But one man took a different stance—the nationalist thinker and orator Abdallah al-Nadim. His approach to the issue of family and slavery differed a great deal from many of his colleagues, in his attempts to seriously argue from the perspective of Sudanese slaves themselves. As such, his work is very valuable in reevaluations of the nineteenth-century discourse on African slavery in the Islamic Middle East. His perspective offers a dimension that complicates the binary of ‘good masters/bad masters,’ which dominated the arguments of his Egyptian and British contemporaries, and enables us to explore the issue of abolition in the Middle East in a new light.

This chapter will focus on two articles written by al-Nadim and published in his last journal, *al-Ustadh*, in 1892. These pieces present a unique and complicated investigation of the institution of the family in Egypt, an institution that al-Nadim recognized as undergoing great and volatile upheaval, with grave consequences for the country. The first dialogue, ‘Sa‘id wa Bakhita,’ represents a conversation between two manumitted Sudanese slaves in Cairo trying to decide what their next step should be, now that they were free. The second, a group of articles organized as ‘Question’ then ‘The Answer’ in a series, explores how different classes of women in Egypt labor within their own households and situates domestic slaves as the instruments by which Egyptian mothers evaded their moral obligations to the raising of children. Both place slaves firmly in the middle of the controversy about family, which was so politically charged at the time, while drawing sometimes surprising conclusions about the relationship between domestic slavery and the position of working-class women.

Debating the African Slave Trade

After several years of resistance, Khedive Ismail, ruler of Egypt, submitted to the increasing volume of petitions, appeals, and outright pressure from the British government and signed the Anglo-Egyptian Convention for the Suppression of the Slave Trade, in 1877. The convention prohibited trade in African slaves, a trade that was at that time concentrated in the Egyptian-dominated Sudan and along the Red Sea coast. Ismail had been able to extend Egyptian control of this particular coast only with the cooperation of the British government, which had itself become involved in supporting the policies of the Anti-Slavery Society in Zanzibar, Oman, and Tanganyika. As the politics of anti-slavery grew more powerful in England, they affected and then shaped the negotiations between the Egyptian ruler and the British government.² They also proved powerful enough to persuade many in the British government that the Muslim rulers and potentates of East Africa could not be trusted to remain in power, precisely because of the existence of slavery in this region.

The anti-slavery movement gained momentum in England from the stories about the trade published by explorers like Dr. David Livingstone, Richard Burton, John Hanning Speke and James Grant, and Sir Samuel Baker. Their narratives about the havoc against innocents that slavery wrought were reprinted in newspapers and served as the evidence for what became a massive, evocative human-rights campaign against the African slave trade. Interestingly, many of these writers noticed how much more gentle slavery was within Islamic regions, after the trauma of enslavement was accepted. As Speke wrote in 1863,

[T]he slave in this new position finds himself much better off than he ever was in his life before, with this exception, that as a slave he feels himself much degraded in the social scale of society, and his family ties are all cut off from him—probably his relations have all been killed in the war in which he was captured. Still, after the first qualms have worn off, we find him much attached to his master, who feeds him and finds him clothes in return for the menial services which he performs.³

But even such mildness cannot, for Speke, obviate the ultimate horror of the slave trade. “Slavery begets slavery,” he wrote. “To catch slaves is the first thought of every chief in the interior; hence fights and slavery impoverish the land, and that is the reason why Africa does not improve.”⁴

Egypt's long domination of the Sudan, Ismail's ambitions to further extend Egypt's control of the Nile Valley, and the numbers of Egyptians involved in the trade in slaves all made the khedive and Egypt clear targets for the concerned attention of the abolition movement. Ismail tried to counter these suspicions by employing European military officials to help his government fight the trade and to gain greater international standing. Sir Samuel Baker was one of these individuals hired to fight the slave trade in the Sudan, in 1869. Ten years after his expedition, he described his mission in the following terms:

It was thus that the Khedive determined at the risk of his popularity among his own subjects to strike a direct blow at the slave trade in its distant nest. To insure the fulfillment of this difficult enterprise, he selected an Englishman, armed with a despotic power such as had never been entrusted by a Mohammedan to a Christian.

The slave trade was to be suppressed; legitimate commerce was to be introduced, and protection was to be afforded to the natives by the establishment of a government.

The suppression of the slave trade was a compliment to the European Powers which would denote the superiority of Egypt, and would lay the first stone in the foundation of a new civilization; and a population that was rapidly disappearing would be saved to Africa.⁵

However, Baker's fateful phrase "the establishment of a government" caused many abolitionists to wonder what kind of authority would be institutionalized, and it increased British suspicions that Ismail himself was trying to colonize vulnerable African lands. The convention of 1877 only increased anti-slavery watchfulness. In a few short years, many Egyptians would, in turn, begin to question British motivations, noticing how much more control of African territories was falling into British hands and wondering if abolitionism was simply imperialism spelled differently. Even more worrying, the khedive had signed the convention while his treasury had been bankrupted due to excessive borrowing from European banks, and a great deal of the government's finances were being supervised by European financiers. By 1884, the date by which the decree was to be put into full effect, Ismail had been deposed, the Urabi rebellion put down, the Mahdiyya had gained control of most of the Sudan, and the British were in full occupation of Egypt. Those who had

foreseen the loss of Egyptian independence in the increased attention of Europeans into the slave trade now felt, unfortunately, vindicated.

This moment of crisis further exposed the embarrassments of slavery. The British now possessed the authority to more fully explore the presence of African slaves in Egypt. Lord Cromer, the British consul general, created manumission bureaus throughout the country, with a solid supply of primarily European investigative agents. He also created the Cairo Home for Freed Slave Women to train former slaves for paid domestic labor.⁶ This proximity to Egyptian society exacerbated tensions between the British and Egyptians, and the tension increased as castigation of Egyptian Muslim culture became international. In 1888, for example, a Parisian cleric, Cardinal Lavigerie, gave a sermon condemning Islamic attitudes about slavery. An Egyptian law student named Ahmed Shafik heard this sermon and responded to it in a long presentation that he gave in 1890 at the Khedivial Geographic Society in Cairo, which was quickly printed. In his response, Shafik pointed out that European abolitionists often equated slavery in Islam with the physically much harsher institutions of slavery in the West. This was a mistake, Shafik stated, not only in its refusal to recognize the complicity of the Christian religious institutions with slavery but also in its blindness to the mildness with which slaves in the Islamic world were treated. Shafik asserted that, unlike in the Americas where slaves were stigmatized socially by their race, slaves were intimately integrated into Egyptian homes.⁷ And the historical record usually bears out Shafik's assertions. However, as both Ehud Toledano and Jay Spaulding have pointed out, this has projected an oversimplified view of domestic African slavery. Slavery in rural areas of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire was often much harsher than the domestic slavery practiced in Cairo and other big cities. In what Toledano cites as 'core' areas, though, slaves were generally well treated. Still, the reiteration of the much-heralded 'mildness' of the institution often disabled contemporaries and historians from recognizing "the vulnerability and the powerlessness of Ottoman slaves, especially bondwomen, vis-a-vis their owners."⁸

Domesticity, Slavery, and the Labors of Love

Many British officials were extremely curious about the defenselessness of female slaves and based their conclusions on evidence gathered by officers employed in the manumission bureaus around Egypt. Unlike Ahmed Shafik, however, these men took the ease with which black slaves

entered Egyptian households as a token of Egyptian backwardness. “It must not be forgotten,” wrote one official to Lord Cromer, “that in this country the selling of slaves from a Musulman [Muslim] point of view is considered legal, that amongst natives the custom of employing paid female servants, is far from general: so that the possession of slaves or even the selling of them, does not offend public morality as it would in a civilized country.”⁹ It was also widely believed that the inaccessibility of the women’s quarters created conditions in which slavery flourished. As another officer summed up in 1886, “[T]he inmates of a harem, moreover, are so secluded that it would often be difficult to find whether a Negro girl was treated, within harem walls, as a free servant or a slave.”¹⁰

Through the testimony of slaves freed at British-run manumission bureaus, British agents and officials gained access to the private domestic environment of many Egyptian families. With no other means of investigating the lives of women, many British government officials synecdochically equated ‘the harem’ with the slaves; all Egyptian women were considered virtual slaves in their own homes. These judgments, glimpses, and speculations created an erotic, exotic discourse about the lives of Egyptian women and ignored the small but growing numbers of Egyptian women journalists and writers publishing their own ideas about the future of the Egyptian family.¹¹ How were Egyptians to respond to these equations of family with slavery?

One of the most sensitive and interesting responses to this uncomfortable situation was written by Abdallah al-Nadim, who had returned from a decade-long exile to Egypt after the defeat of the Urabi rebellion, and who had started, almost immediately, a new newspaper called *al-Ustadh* (The Teacher). Actually, the British authorities had given al-Nadim’s brother permission to launch the paper and had warned that current politics were not to be directly addressed. Al-Nadim thus had to approach the issue of slavery from a carefully articulated framework. He created a dialogue, in Egyptian colloquial Arabic, between two recently freed slaves, Sa‘id and Bakhita, in which the two try to figure out what to do with the rest of their lives.

The dialogue begins when Sa‘id meets Bakhita and asks her where she is now working. She answers that she has no work and that she wishes they were still slaves, still being cared for and fed by their masters. Sa‘id reminds her that they were also regularly beaten by these same masters, and Bakhita concedes that she finds pleasure in freedom, but she

still laments: “We came from our country like beasts [*zayy al-babayim*] and it was our masters who taught us about Islam [*al-kalam wa-l-hadith*] and taught us about cleanliness, food, drink, how to dress and how to speak properly since we spoke in a way that no one could understand.” Continuing to praise the kindness of her masters, Bakhita recounts how she was like a daughter to her mistress: “If my master tried to beat me, she would argue and yell at him. We always held hands, even when we were eating our meals.”¹²

Sa‘id, however, remembers physical torments and the terrible journey with the slave dealers more vividly than he does any kindness from his former masters. But Bakhita makes one point on which they both agree: that it is confusing and difficult to parcel themselves out to different households, to work for one household one month and another the next. Slavery is not better than freedom, she admits, but the uncertainty of independent living is too hard to tolerate. Sa‘id agrees that the precarious employment situation of former slaves is very dire, and he tells Bakhita that he thinks the government should take responsibility for them and give to every manumitted slave a plot of land from royal estates and the necessary machinery and tools. After all, he says, they used us to cultivate a lot of land, year after year, in addition to the government having conscripted so many soldiers out of the Sudan. Sa‘id says he has even heard that the Ottoman sultan offered such a gesture to the Sudanese, from whose agricultural bounty the empire is profiting.¹³

This was a daring and singular suggestion on al-Nadim’s part, asking the Egyptian government to take responsibility for the futures of the men and women formerly enslaved by Egyptians. He also recognized, in this dialogue, how difficult it was for freed slaves to find an independent place for themselves in society, particularly for women. Much to Sa‘id’s annoyance, Bakhita cannot stop referring to her previous ‘masters,’ even as her friend tries to get her to see them as simply *al-jama‘a al-aghnayya* (the wealthy class) who could help create a new entrepreneurial collective of their former slaves.¹⁴ Sa‘id envisions the freed slaves as storekeepers and as contractors with their own teams of workers. Sa‘id imagines Sudanese working in a wide range of fields, not only as the servants that many had been for so long. Bakhita balks at the impossibility of Sa‘id’s dreams, but he ends the dialogue with a challenge and a hope. “We’ll publish this conversation in *al-Ustadh* and we’ll see what progressive people will do with us.”¹⁵

Language and the Family

Al-Nadim knew that many of his pieces were read out loud, which would thus force his readers to articulate this challenge to themselves as well as to illiterate listeners. The reader would therefore become both subject and object for a brief moment, before he and his listeners began to discuss the merits of al-Nadim's points.¹⁶ Unlike the earlier, comic dialogues of the playwright and journalist Ya'qub Sanu'a, in which Sudanese characters regularly mispronounce Egyptian dialect, al-Nadim offered no indication of accent in this discussion. One wonders if the dialogue would have provoked a greater sense of inclusion of slaves among Egyptians or whether it was just an exercise in cultural ventriloquism. Would people have read this dialogue out loud, mimicking Sudanese or Nubian accents? Would the last sentence—"We'll see what progressive people do with us"—have felt like a rebuke of such mimicry or have been an effective means of driving the point of Sa'id's humanity even further home?

It is also interesting how the dialogue treated gender roles. Sa'id wishes several times that the government would provide them with the plots of land they deserve, then the Sudanese could marry each other and create the sort of family life that he feels they deserve.¹⁷ The idea of marriage accompanies the suggestion of the Sudanese getting the chance to create their own community. While it would be dependent on the investments of previous employers, it would be an independent community, liberated from the homes of wealthy Egyptians. Several sentences later, Sa'id repeats the wish for respectability and for the rights of the Sudanese to marry and create homes with their women, "our sisters."¹⁸ But Bakhita has more trouble envisioning this kind of family setting, so rooted does her loyalty remain to her former mistress, to whom she was like a daughter.¹⁹ Bakhita's heart is intimately connected to her Egyptian 'family.' She is not ready to become the matriarch of her own family. She is paralyzed in a kind of perpetual childhood, not able to take up her position as a mature Muslim woman. Al-Nadim thus held up proper marriage within Islam as an ideal, and with Bakhita's incapacity to even imagine herself as an active part of this ideal, he demonstrates one sad consequence of long years of servitude. Thus, he also contradicted the traditional assertion that slavery had taught the Sudanese how to be civilized by revealing a woman stunted by her 'education.' Bakhita's social stagnation

thus presents an important disjuncture in the dialogue. While Bakhita did not mature under the institution of slavery, Sa‘id clearly did grow into a thinking, articulate man ready and able for independence, self-supporting labor, and his own family. Such a disjuncture leaves important questions about where al-Nadim thought women fit within the construct of the family.

Labor, Women, and the Family

Ahmed Shafik’s earlier insistence that slaves formed part of the Egyptian family involved another equally controversial discourse between British officials and Egyptians, and between Egyptians themselves, that the Egyptian family was an institution of ‘civilization’ for any slaves within. Abdallah al-Nadim’s dialogue between Sa‘id and Bakhita also problematizes this ideal within an Islamic context, by showing its lack of success. Bakhita is bereft without slavery and unable to mature, leaving questions about the situation of free women within the household. These were provocative questions that encompassed fears about the future of the Egyptian nation itself. Lord Cromer launched a significant salvo when he stated that the situation of women in Egypt, which he viewed as tragically backward, would prevent Egyptians from the political sovereignty so many desired, because Islam was the intractable fiber of Egyptian society. This immutable foundation meant that Egyptian women would forever be slaves in despotic households ruled by unthinking men.²⁰ Cromer prescribed as an antidote the transformation of the Egyptian household into an accessible site where educated women could rear children unhandicapped by gender segregation and veiling.²¹

In his published views on the Egyptian family, Lord Cromer translated post-Darwinian British conceptions of the proper Victorian family and the idea that the nation represented such an archetype. As Anne McClintock has written, in this idealization of a particular kind of nuclear family, “a woman’s political relation to the nation was thus submerged as a social relation to a man through marriage. For women, citizenship in the nation was mediated by the marriage relation within the family.”²² Interestingly, Abdallah al-Nadim inferred that women’s political relationship to the nation was mediated by the amount of work they performed for their families, and that this labor was different among the various social classes of Egyptian society.

Al-Nadim structured one article, “Su’al” (Question), around the idea of the equality between men and women, asking his readers to discuss whether there was such equality among themselves, and send him their answers. He urged his readers to consider the different circumstances of Egyptian women, which he outlined clearly in the subsequent article “Jawab” (Answer): the fellah in her rural poverty and her poor counterpart in the cities, as well as middle-class and wealthy women, both of whom he located only in urban areas.

With great detail, in long lists of chores and household details, al-Nadim describes the labors of the peasant woman. Awake before dawn, she feeds the livestock, bakes bread for her family, gives her husband and children breakfast, milks the cows, cleans the house, washes the family’s clothes, and brings the livestock out to pasture. If she is a fellah from a certain area of the delta, she also must pack patties of manure for fuel. Her family responsibilities are to her husband and her children; no other member, such as a mother-in-law or cousins, is mentioned. But the truly remarkable labor performed by the fellah is her ease in giving birth, without interrupting her other duties: “I saw a hugely pregnant woman go from her village to get clover for the water buffaloes one day. After several hours labor pains overtook her while she was alone. She gave birth, wrapped the baby next to the clover, and carried this on her head, returning with two bundles. She passed by us, laughing, and told us of her happy accomplishment.”²³ Labor, in all its meanings, cannot stop the sturdy peasant woman. Her labors make the family and keep it together.

In a second article published two weeks later, al-Nadim investigates the working lives of the city woman. The poor woman in the city wakes up before her husband, prepares breakfast for him and for the children, cleans the house, washes the clothes, perhaps does some piecework as well, like embroidery or making handkerchiefs, or teaches her daughters to do the same. Her work is difficult but not described in nearly the same amount of detail that al-Nadim used to portray the fellah woman. The *mutawassita* (middle-class woman) has a slave or a servant who does the necessary cleaning and cooking. Sometimes the *mutawassita* helps the domestics, but if it is a beautiful day outside, she has the time to put on a clean dress and go out to enjoy it.²⁴ As for the wealthy urban woman, she has so many slaves and servants that she does not work at all, except when absolutely necessary. Life requires her only to make sure that the household work gets done.²⁵

All women bear the work of pregnancy, birth, and rearing children, work that al-Nadim says all women love. Among the fellahin, birth is invariably easy, as it is for the urban poor, too. But middle-class and wealthy women have a more difficult time with labor and giving birth and are more susceptible to commonplace ‘women’s sicknesses,’ which are quickly cured. All of these classes of women love their children and the pleasure of raising them, but wealth deprives upper-class women from knowing this pleasure, since servants and slaves provide the child-care. From all this, al-Nadim concludes that the fellah works much harder than her husband, that the poor city woman works as hard as her husband, that the middle-class woman works less than her husband, and that the wealthy woman has no work at all, except being beautiful. Thus, only the poor women equal men in their labors. And using an image of the wealthy harem that Lord Cromer himself would have found familiar, “*fa innabunna ala firash al-raba fi al-layl wa-l-nahar*” (rich women rest on their comfortable beds night and day).²⁶

In this short series, and the dialogue “Sa‘id wa Bakhita,” al-Nadim connects the issues of slavery and the ideal of the Egyptian family to the phenomenon of labor. The hardest worker in the family is the most honorable, the most equal to men because of the generosity of her work. It is interesting that the archetypal Egyptian woman who earns this honor is the peasant woman whose toil differs the most from the domestic servant or slave (both of whom exist only in the city, in al-Nadim’s construction). Domestic slaves in Egypt, for the most part, did not perform agricultural work. In al-Nadim’s portrayal, the least equal to men is the wealthy woman, who loses all dignity and status.

Furthermore, slaves disrupt the balance of the family in two important ways. Their very presence in the household enables the middle-class or wealthy woman to evade her own domestic and maternal responsibilities. Second, their living in the households of others prevents them from forming their own true families, where their hard work will be shared by their husbands, and where such hard work forms the basis of a real cooperative, a family unit. And so, this contemporary observer of late-nineteenth-century Egyptian life debases the wealthiest women of his society, making their lives less meaningful than that of slaves, and inversely elevates the poor fellah as the ultimate care-giver, and the slave woman gains her dignity through what she has wrongly been denied—her own family and home.

Notes

- 1 McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 357.
- 2 Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade*, 224–25. See also British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society Papers, British Empire, Box G-26, Rhodes House, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, for the petitions brought directly before the khedive from delegations of the society's members.
- 3 Speke, *Journal*, xxvii.
- 4 Speke, *Journal*, xxvii.
- 5 Baker, *Ismailia*, 4.
- 6 Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 190.
- 7 Shafik, “L’Esclavage,” 465.
- 8 Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition*, 19.
- 9 Public Records Office [hereafter PRO], Foreign Office [hereafter FO] 84/1770, Colonel Schaefer to Lord Cromer, 18 April 1886.
- 10 PRO, FO 84/1770. Report of C. G. Scott Moncrieff, “Cairo Home for Freed Women Slaves, May 1886.”
- 11 Baron, “Mothers, Morality, and Nationalism,” 272.
- 12 al-Nadim, “Sa‘id wa Bakhita,” 1: 91.
- 13 al-Nadim, “Sa‘id wa Bakhita,” 1: 93.
- 14 al-Nadim, “Sa‘id wa Bakhita,” 1: 92.
- 15 al-Nadim, “Sa‘id wa Bakhita,” 1: 93.
- 16 Hafez, *Genesis*, 84.
- 17 al-Nadim, “Sa‘id wa Bakhita,” 92.
- 18 al-Nadim, “Sa‘id wa Bakhita,” 93.
- 19 Daws, “al-Amiyya al-misriyya,” 295. Dr. Daws makes an interesting point about the different styles of dialect used by men and women in al-Nadim’s work.
- 20 Baring (Lord Cromer), *Modern Egypt*, 2: 138.
- 21 Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 112.
- 22 McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 358.
- 23 al-Nadim, “Jawab,” 1: 118.
- 24 al-Nadim, “Tabi‘ al-jawab,” 1: 160.
- 25 al-Nadim, “Tabi‘ al-jawab,” 1: 160.
- 26 al-Nadim, “Tabi‘ al-jawab,” 1: 161.

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al-Dhawat (documents relating to notables)

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Mahkamat Tulun

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